LIFE OF VOLTAIRE

JAMES PARTON

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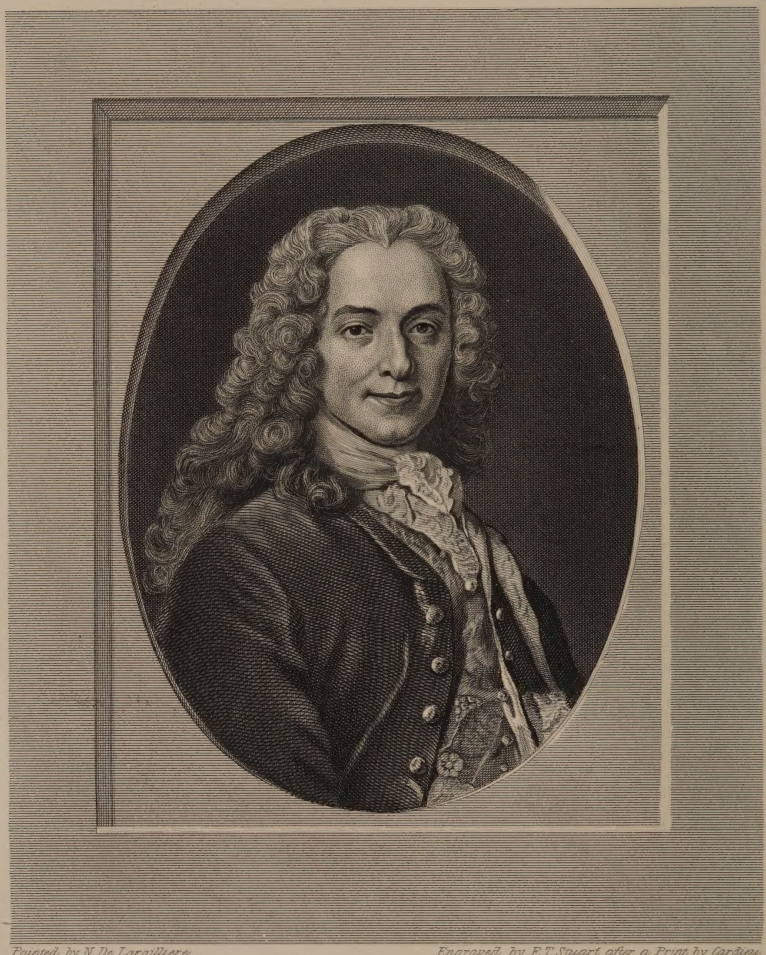

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VOLTAIRE.

At the age of 24.

Cambridge Mass.
OCT 31 1885

LIFE OF VOLTAIRE.

BY

JAMES PARTON.

C'est dommage, à la vérité, de passer une partie de sa vie à détruire de vieux châteaux enchantés. Il vaudrait mieux établir des vérités que d'examiner des mensonges; mais où sont les vérités?

VOLTAIRE, 1760

VOLUME I.

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PREFACE.

I ATTEMPT in these volumes to exhibit to the American people the most extraordinary of Frenchmen, and one of the most extraordinary of human beings.

When first I ventured, many years ago, to think of this task, I soon ceased to wonder why a subject so alluring had not been undertaken before by any one employing the whole of the existing material. Voltaire was then buried under a mountain of heterogeneous record. The attempts of essayists, even those of the first rank, to characterize him truly were in some degree frustrated by an abundance of unsorted information that defied all ordinary research. Since that time the Voltairean material has continued to accumulate, and never so rapidly as during the last three years.

At this moment, if I lift my eyes from the desk on which I write, I see before me volumes containing fifty thousand printed pages of his composition, including more than two hundred and sixty separate publications. The published correspondence of Voltaire now comprises more than ten thousand letters. The works relating to him and his doings form a catalogue of four hundred and twenty-eight entries, which will probably be increased before these volumes see the light. Scarcely a month passes without some addition to the wonderful mass. At one time it is a series of letters found in a grocer's shop, or rendered accessible by the death of an heir of one of his princely correspondents; now, an enterprising editor gives his readers an unpublished poem; recently, Mr. Gallatin deposited in the library of the New York Historical Society sixty-six pieces of paper and card containing words written or dictated by him; and in September, 1880, came from Paris

the announcement of "Le Sottisier de Voltaire," from one of the eighteen volumes of manuscript in his library at Petersburg. No sooner is an edition of his works published than it is made incomplete by a new discovery. Since the issue of the ninety-seven-volume edition in 1834, enough matter has accumulated to fill six or seven volumes more.

Still more strange, the mass of his writings, and, I may even say, every page of them, has to this hour a certain vitality and interest. If it has not intrinsic excellence, it possesses the interest of an obsolete kind of agreeable folly; if it is not truth, it is a record of error that instructs or amuses. He was mistaken in supposing that no man could go to posterity laden with so much baggage. In some cases it is the baggage that floats him, and many readers of to-day find his prefaces, notes, and introductions more entertaining than the work hidden in the midst of them. Nearly every page of this printed matter contains at least an atom of biography, and I can fairly claim to have had my eye upon it, indexed it, and given it consideration.

At the end of this volume will be found a list of the publications relating to Voltaire (Appendix I.), and this is followed by the catalogue of his own works (Appendix II.); both lists being arranged in the order of their publication, and the titles translated into English.

The reader is probably aware that every circumstance in the history of this man, from the date of his birth to the resting-place of his bones, is matter of controversy. If I had paused to state the various versions of each event and the interpretations put upon each action, this work would have been ten volumes instead of two. It would have been, like many other biographies, not a history of the man, but a history of the struggles of the author in getting at the man. Generally, therefore, I have given only the obvious or most probable truth, and have often refrained from even mentioning anecdotes and statements that I knew to be groundless. Why prolong the life of a falsehood merely for the sake of refuting it?

The Voltaire of these volumes is the nearest to the true one that I have been able to gather and construct. I think the

man is to be found in these pages delineated by himself. But he was such an enormous personage that another writer, equally intent upon truth, could find in the mass of his remains quite another Voltaire. I received once from Paris, in the same parcel, two books about him, both written, as it seemed, by honest, able, and resolute men. One was the work of the Abbé Maynard, a canon of Poictiers, who ended his two thick volumes of laborious vituperation by saying that Voltaire was a mere "monkey of genius, who amused and diverted by his funny tricks." The other work, "Le Vrai Voltaire," by Edouard de Pompery, spoke of him as the most virtuous man of his age, because he did the most good to his kind, and because there was in his heart the most burning love of justice and truth. "Voltaire," this author continued, "was the best Christian of his time, the first and the most glorious disciple of Jesus."

There was space in Voltaire to include these extremes. He was faulty enough to gratify the prejudice of that honest priest; he was good enough to kindle, justify, and sustain the enthusiasm of that young philanthropist.

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LIFE OF VOLTAIRE.

CHAPTER I.

ANCESTORS.

François-Marie Arouet, who at the age of twenty-four assumed the name of Voltaire, was born at Paris on Sunday, November 21, 1694.

At that time Louis XIV. had been for fifty-one years styled King of France, and had twenty-one years to live. William and Mary reigned in England. Prussia was a dukedom. Charles XII. of Sweden was a good and studious boy of twelve under his father's tutelage, and Peter I. of Russia, twelve years Czar, had not begun to build the present capital of the Russian Empire. The great Newton, still in the prime of his years, had done the immortal part of his work, and was about to become Master of the Mint. Racine lived, the first name in the literature of the Continent, and Dryden, the head of English literature, was translating Virgil. Pope was six years of age.

François-Marie was the first of the Arouets to acquire distinction, and he neither knew nor cared for his pedigree. In one of the last weeks of his life, when a local genealogist wrote to him to say that two cities of old Poitou were contending for the honor of having nourished his ancestors, he replied by a jocular allusion to the seven cities that claimed to be the birthplace of Homer, and added, "I have no way of reconciling this dispute."[1] In his vast correspondence, all topics are more frequently touched upon than that of his own family and origin. In old age he wrote once to a neighbor who meditated buying a piece of land in which he held a life interest, "Now, sir, I give you notice that I count upon living to the age of eighty-two at least, since my grandfather, who

[1] Voltaire to Du Moustier de La Fond, April 7, 1778

was as dried up as I am, and wrote neither verse nor prose, lived to eighty-three." [1]

This dried-up grandfather was François Arouet, of Paris, a retired draper, living in 1666 in his own house, Rue St. Denis, with his two children, Marie and François. Country born and bred, he had come up to Paris in early life, probably with some capital, and, having established himself in business, had thriven, married, and gained a competence. It was a time when a Paris tradesman could comfortably retire upon a capital of a hundred thousand francs.

The family was ancient and respectable. The earliest ancestor of whom anything is known was Helenus Arouet, who was living in 1525 at a village in the valley of the Thouet, a tributary of the Loire, not far from Poitiers, and about two hundred miles southwest of Paris. He was a tanner by trade, married a tanner's daughter, and brought up one of his sons a tanner. He possessed and transmitted two small estates. Probably the family had been established in the region for generations: an ancestor may have witnessed the battle of Poitiers in 1356, whence the Black Prince bore away captive to England John, King of France. There is no part of France more purely and primitively French than that portion of the old province of Poitou. A grandson of this Helenus Arouet, who was also named Helenus, passed his days at the little town of St. Loup, in the same neighborhood, where he became the father of five children, and inherited one of his grandfather's small estates. François, the retired cloth merchant of Paris, was one of his sons. After serving the usual long apprenticeship to a weaver in a village of the same neighborhood, François Arouet passed some years in business at his native city of St. Loup, and then made a bold stroke to improve his circumstances in removing to Paris. This he did about the year 1621, when the Pilgrim Fathers of New England were starving through their first summer at Plymouth. When he died, in 1667, a dried-up grandfather of eighty-three, his son François was eighteen years of age, and his daughter Marie was twenty. She married Mathurin Marchand, a "purveyor to Monsieur, the brother of the king."

Besides these lineal ancestors of Voltaire, we have slight

[1] 2 Lettres Inédites de Voltaire, 163. Paris, 1857.

occasional notices of other connections and relations, all indicating the respectable bourgeois rank of the family. He speaks himself, in his "Charles XII." (Book V.), of deriving important information from "the letters of M. Bru, my relation, first dragoman (*drogman*, he spells it) at the Ottoman Porte." Jean Arouet, a near relation of his father, was the apothecary of St. Loup for many years, and Samuel Arouet, another relation, was the notary of the same place. But there is no trace of a literary man in any record of the family yet discovered: for that René Arouet, notary and poet of Poitou, who died in 1499, and who has been reckoned among the progenitors of Voltaire for a century past, proves to be René Adouet.[1]

It was then not alone the extremely dry grandfather of Voltaire who wrote neither prose nor verse. No known Arouet has ever written except François-Marie Arouet, the subject of this work. A thriving, painstaking race they seem to have been, with some spirit of enterprise among them; trustworthy, vivacious, irascible, but not gifted, nor interested in the products of the gifted. The occupations often chosen by them — tanner, weaver, draper, apothecary, purveyor, notary — are such as required exactness, fidelity, patience, and contentment with moderate gains.

St. Loup, in or near which for many generations the Arouets exercised such useful and homely vocations, is an ancient little city, the centre of the wine, leather, and wool trade of the vicinity, containing at present seventeen hundred inhabitants. Sheep, cattle, asses, and the vine, then as now, made the wealth of the region round about, and the trades of the Arouets, particularly tanner, weaver, and draper, are still among those that most flourish there. In portions of the department, now named Deux-Sèvres, industry is almost confined, says Reclus, to tanning and weaving, and to the breeding of horses, asses, and mules. During the Revolution, St. Loup, mindful of its Arouets and their famous descendant, changed its ancient name to Voltaire. But the new appellation did not adhere. At present they who would find the name upon the map of the world must look for it among the possessions of Great Britain. Cape Voltaire is a headland of Australia.

[1] La Jeunesse de Voltaire, par Desnoiresterres, page 6.

CHAPTER II.

NOTARIES IN FRANCE.

François Arouet, the father of Voltaire, was a Paris notary in large practice. Left an orphan at the age of eighteen, joint heir with his sister Marie of a considerable estate, he could choose an occupation deemed more eligible than that of draper, by which his father had thriven. He became, therefore, by purchase, one of the hundred and thirteen notaries licensed in Paris under Louis XIV.

In the Latin nations of Europe, as frequenters of the Italian opera and all readers of French and Spanish literature must have observed, notaries are more important functionaries than they are now with us. Columbus and the other navigators of his age had notaries with them to witness and attest their taking possession of discovered lands. A royal notary witnessed the king's signature when he gave a coronet or renounced a crown. Readers will readily recall the notary of comedy and opera, who enters in the closing scene, — an odd figure in a black robe, with long, curling wig, and a hat of any preposterous and unauthorized shape which the resources of the theatre can supply. He advances to a table provided for him, and salutes the company with official gayety or official gloom, according to the nature of the service he is about to render. He is the personage waited for, and his entrance often crowns the occasion ; for in France, as in Italy and Spain, no betrothal, marriage contract, will, agreement, or record has legal validity unless it bears the attestation of a licensed notary. Hence his importance in life and his utility in literature. The entrance of the notary, followed by his clerk, both robed in black, deepens the gloom of a tragic finale ; and the same personages are available for the farcical element in a romantic drama, and add comic force to an act of Molière.

In countries where few can write, but all are subject to the same laws, some such practitioner as the Roman *notarius*, the French *notaire*, the English notary, is indispensable; and we should still find him so in the United States and Great Britain if most of us had not learned to write our documents for ourselves. The father of John Milton was a London notary in the reign of James I., and the business was then so lucrative in England that he earned by it the estate that enabled him to give his son every educational advantage which the wealthiest nobleman could have procured for an heir, including twenty consecutive years of study and fifteen months of foreign travel. All that a London notary was in 1620, when John Milton was a boy, a Paris notary was when Voltaire was born, seventy-four years after.

Under Louis XIV., there was required to be one notary in every parish of the kingdom that contained sixty households; two in the smaller market towns, from four to ten in the larger; twenty in towns having a parliament, and one hundred and thirteen in Paris: so many, but no more. The notaries were commissioned by the king; they were allowed to exhibit over their door the royal arms as a sign; they could stand in the exercise of their vocation at the door of the king's cabinet. As most charges in the time of Louis XIV. were purchasable, a notary could buy, sell, give, and bequeath his business, provided the recipient was a Catholic Frenchman of twenty-five years, had satisfied the conscription, had studied the profession of notary six years, and served one year as a notary's first clerk.

Besides the more interesting duties mentioned above, notaries drew, attested, and registered such documents as leases, deeds, transfers, agreements of all kinds, papers relating to annuities, bankruptcies, gifts, reversions, apprenticeships, and all other services. Their legal fee was very small. The old notarial manuals enumerate fifty-one acts for which a notary could charge but one franc, and these comprised nearly all that would commonly be required in the country or in country towns. There were two fees allowed of two francs, seven of three francs, three of five francs, one of ten francs, four of fifteen francs, one of twenty-five francs. Reading over the list of these moderate fees, we wonder how a notary, even as busy

and thriving as the father of Voltaire, could have gained a revenue of several thousand francs a year, until we come to the transactions for which he was allowed to charge a percentage of the sum involved. If a gentleman had money to lend, it was to his notary that he applied to find a borrower, and the notary received a percentage of the amount. The lending of money and the purchase of annuities were important branches of notarial business, the judicious cultivation of which rendered the notary himself a capitalist, and enabled him to use to his own signal advantage the knowledge of families and estates which it belonged to his vocation to possess. A very large proportion of the business done among us by solicitors, attorneys, conveyancers, brokers, note discounters, life insurers, and confidential family lawyers was and is performed in France by notaries.

The profession bears an honorable name, which is justified by the excellent character of its members. Their commission being an estate, which can be sold, transferred, or bequeathed, but which can also be lost by misconduct, notaries are subject to that force and composition of motives to do right which experience shows to be generally necessary and generally sufficient. From the earliest ages the profession has increased in importance, even to the present time, when a notary, in such practice as Voltaire's father had, gains a quarter of a million francs a year, and when there is a stately edifice in Paris, called The Chamber of Notaries, which is in fact the real-estate exchange of France, as well as the Paris notaries' rendezvous. The profession boasts a literature. Even in a New York library is a massive volume of 816 pages, "Nouveau Manuel des Notaires," published in 1818, and "Le Parfait Notaire," in three larger volumes, published in 1821.

The rank of a French notary in the time of Louis XIV. is difficult to fix, because, strictly speaking, he had no rank, either in the legal profession or in the social scale. In Roman times he was a slave, as most men were who performed useful offices. A French author discovered, some years since, among stray parchments, an ordinance of Philippe le Bel, dated 1304, which forbade members of this profession to exercise the barber's trade, because, being the depositary of family secrets, a notary ought not to be trusted with the use of a barber's im-

plements, which then included the lancet and the knife, as well as the razor and the shears. The ordinance added that, since the business of a notary did not furnish the means of subsistence, he could exercise any trade except that of barber.[1] As life grew more complicated in France, the business of notaries increased, until their importance had far outgrown their technical rank, and given them a standing not unlike that of a solicitor in an English town, whose tin boxes are stuffed with family papers, and who knows the secrets of half the county families.

In a satirical romance, published in Paris when Voltaire was a boy, there is a "tariff or valuation of matches," designed, as the author says, to exhibit the "corruption of the age which had introduced the custom of marrying one sack of money to another sack of money." This table, burlesque though it be, is the burlesque of a not unskillful hand, and it may help us to understand the social importance of notaries in Paris then. According to this authority, a girl who had a dowry of two thousand to ten thousand francs was a match for a retail trader, a lawyer's clerk, or a bailiff. A dowry of ten to twelve thousand francs justified a maiden in aspiring to a dealer in silk, a draper, an innkeeper, a secretary to a great lord. A young lady of twelve to twenty thousand francs was a match for a clerk of court, an attorney, a court registrar, A NOTARY. She who possessed twenty to thirty thousand francs might look as high as an advocate or a government officer of considerable rank. Higher grades in the law and government service could be matched by dowries rising from thirty thousand francs to a hundred thousand crowns; which last could be fairly wedded to "a real marquis," a president of a parliament, a peer of France, a duke.[2]

By courtesy a notary was called *maître*, a word which has as many shades of meaning as our word *master*, and, like master, is not always a title of honor. Applied to a notary, it was a flattering intimation that he, too, belonged to the law, — *la robe*, — which had its *noblesse*, its retainers, and its servants of many grades.

[1] Histoire de la Détention des Philosophes et Gens de Lettres à la Bastille, etc., par J. Delort. Paris, 1829. Vol. ii. p. 11.

[2] Le Roman Bourgeois. Paris, 1712. Page 18.

CHAPTER III.

BIRTH AND HOME.

Maître François Arouet is known to have been a competent notary; but, in accordance with the system into which he was born, he obtained every step in his profession by purchase. In 1675, when he was twenty-six years of age, his seven years' apprenticeship being accomplished, he bought for ten thousand francs, duly paid to his predecessor, the place of notary to the city court of Paris, called the Châtelet. The sum was large for that primitive day, before John Law had inflated the mind, as well as the money, of France. We can get an idea of its value from one of Madame de Maintenon's letters of 1680, in which she says that her brother and his wife kept house handsomely in Paris, paying rent, having a good dinner every day, keeping ten domestics, two coachmen, and four horses, upon nine thousand francs a year, of which they allowed three thousand for the theatre, cards, fancies, and "magnificences." In other words, Maître Arouet's ten thousand francs was equivalent to at least sixty thousand francs of the present time.

A thriving young notary, with a good office, several important clients, and some capital of his own to lend them, could marry out of his sphere, even under Louis XIV. In 1683, when he had reached the prudent age of thirty-four, Maître Arouet married Mademoiselle Marguerite d'Aumard, of a noble family of Poitou, the ancient province of the Arouets. Nicholas d'Aumard, her father, had held a post of dignity in the parliament of his province, and her brother an office of some authority under the king. Their marriage contract, which is still preserved and accessible, indicates that her rank had its influence upon the terms of the union; she bringing to him a smaller dowry than he might have demanded from an equal, and he making for her, in case she

survived him, a more liberal provision than was usual in his rank. A French author, who has recently read the document, reports that the marriage, on the part of the husband, was far from being "a marriage of money." [1]

Of this lady, the mother of Voltaire, we know too little. In all the multifarious writings of her son, I find but five meagre lines about his mother, though she lived till he was seven years of age. Only twice in his works, I believe, occur the words *ma mère*, when he means his own mother; and he records of her three particulars, not unimportant, but all needing explanation. One is that Ninon de Lenclos had formerly known *ma mère;* another is that *ma mère* had been much the friend of the Abbé de Châteauneuf, Ninon's last lover; and the third that *ma mère* had once seen the poet Boileau, and said of him that he was "a good book and a silly man." [2]

As François Arouet was notary both to Ninon and to Boileau, his name still being legible upon the poet's will, his wife's acquaintance with both may have been accidental and momentary. The notarial office was, for some years, only a room in the family abode. But the gay, the witty, the worldly Abbé de Châteauneuf, we know, was an intimate friend of the mother and of the house, — a fact which goes far to prove that the incongruous element now introduced into the ancient line of the steady-going Arouets was brought to it by Marguerite d'Aumard, of the old Poitou noblesse.

The marriage was too fruitful for the delicate mother's welfare. Within ten months, twin boys were born, one of whom soon died, and the other, Armand by name, lived to succeed his father. Less than thirteen months after was born Marguerite-Catherine, the sister whom Voltaire loved, mother of Madame Denis. In twenty months more, Robert was born, who died in infancy. On Sunday, November 21, 1694, after an interval of some years, the child was born who named himself, twenty-four years after, Voltaire, but who received, on Monday, November 22, 1694, at the baptismal font of a church in Paris, the name of François-Marie.

[1] Jeunesse de Voltaire, page 9.

[2] 63 Œuvres de Voltaire, page 168. 80 Œuvres de Voltaire, page 300.

He seems to have always supposed that he was born February 20, 1694; but the baptismal register, drawn under the eye, and perhaps by the hand, of his own father, one of the first notaries of Paris, bears date November 22d, and adds, "Born the day previous." A letter has also been recently discovered which removes the last doubt. A Poitou cousin, who wrote home from Paris, November 24, 1694, gives this item of family news: "Father, our cousins have another son, born three days ago. Madame Arouet will give me the christening cakes for you and the family. She has been very sick; but it is hoped she will now mend. The child has but a weakly appearance, resulting from the mother's low condition." [1]

He was the last child of his parents, and when he was born his brother Armand was ten years old, and his sister Marguerite nine.

He was born into an affluent and, as it appears, a cheerful and agreeable home. His father, in the prime of life, had acquired the title of counselor to the king, as well as the post of notary to the Châtelet. This latter place, owing apparently to the increase of his private practice, he sold in 1692. Among his clients were the heads of several historic houses, ducal and other. "Many a time," says the Duke de St. Simon, "I have seen him [Maître Arouet] bring papers for my father to sign;" and again, "He was my father's notary, and mine as long as he lived." [2] The Duke de Sully, the Duke de Praslin, the Duke de Richelieu, the Count de Morangiés, are mentioned among his clients; upon whom, we may infer, he waited assiduously in their houses, but received ordinary clients at his own abode in "the city," decorated and designated by the royal arms. The Duchess de St. Simon held one of his children at the font, with the Duke de Richelieu by her side, and there are other indications that Maître Arouet was the man of confidence to his noble clients, and held in high esteem by them. Always thriving, he bought in 1701 another office, — one more lucrative than that of notary to the Châtelet, if not of more importance.

There was then a certain ancient high court in Paris, called

[1] Jeunesse de Voltaire, page 4.

[2] 13 Mémoires de St. Simon, 55. 14 Mémoires de St. Simon, 10. Paris. 1874

the Chamber of Accounts, which stood above all the collectors of the revenue, decided questions relating to the king's claims and dues, and, in general, saw that the royal treasury received no detriment. Duplicates of documents relating to titles, successions, reversions, and estates were stored away in the pile of ancient structures in which it had its seat. It performed, or professed to perform, much that is done with us by auditors, registrars, the court of claims, and investigating committees. Being an ancient court of an ancient monarchy, and having in charge the king's most vital interest, it had grown to preposterous proportions, and gave pretext to such an extraordinary number of snug offices, useful only to the incumbents of the same, that the *Chambre des Comptes* became a by-word in France for hoary abuse and cumbrous inadequacy, like the English Court of Chancery at a later day.

It was an office in this ancient court which Maître Arouet bought in 1701, and which, after holding for the rest of his life, he resigned to his eldest son, Armand, who enjoyed it as long as he lived. The office was that of "payer of fees to the Chamber of Accounts." At that period, litigants in French courts paid fees to the judges who tried their causes. It was the duty of Maître Arouet to collect such fees in the court to which he was attached, and pay them to the judges, receiving at the same time a fee for his own services. Either the causes were numerous or the fees were large, for it is a matter of record that the revenue of this office in the year 1700 was thirteen thousand francs.

As he retained always his private notarial practice, Maître Arouet could henceforth be reckoned among the opulent bourgeois of Paris, his annual income being, as probable tradition reports, twenty-four thousand francs. From an attested document we learn that he possessed a country-house at Chatenay, a beautiful village five miles from the city. That he kept a gardener his undutiful son has told us. "I had a father formerly," wrote Voltaire, in 1772, to La Harpe, "who was as bad a scold as Grichard [in the comedy of the "Grondeur"]. One day, after he had horribly and without cause scolded his gardener, and had almost beaten him, he said to him, 'Get out, you rascal! I wish you may find a master as patient as I am.' I took my father to see the 'Grondeur,' having before-

hand asked the actor to add those identical words to his part; and my good father corrected himself a little." [1]

This anecdote of the prosperous, irascible bourgeois is nearly all the light which the writings of the son cast upon the father. He mentions more than once that on a certain occasion his father saw the aged poet Corneille, and even took wine with him. The young notary was no more pleased with the old dramatist than his wife with Boileau. "My father told me," wrote Voltaire in 1772, "that that great man was the most wearisome mortal he had ever seen, and the man of the lowest conversation." [2]

[1] 91 Œuvres de Voltaire, 246.
[2] 80 Œuvres de Voltaire, 433.

CHAPTER IV.

HIS CHILDHOOD.

FRANÇOIS-MARIE, the last born of a weakly and declining mother, was abandoned to the care of a nurse, who had charge of him in an upper room of the paternal abode. He had at first but the feeblest breath of life, and the family did not expect to rear him. Every morning, for several months, the nurse came down-stairs to tell his mother that the child was dying, and every day the Abbé de Châteauneuf, godfather of the infant and familiar friend of its parents, went up-stairs to discuss with the nurse some new expedient for saving its life. So reports the Abbé Duvernet, who heard from an old friend of Voltaire all that he usually told of his earliest days. It was not till the child had languished the greater part of a year that he began to mend sufficiently to give his parents hopes of saving him. Gradually from that time he gained strength, and became at length a healthy and active child, though never robust.

It fared otherwise with the mother, who, so far as we know, contributed nothing to the formation of this boy except the friends whom she attracted to her home and who continued to frequent it when she was no more. She lingered seven years after his birth, dying July 13, 1701, aged forty.

His father, a busy, thriving man, occupied with his office, his clients, and his growing capital, appears to have concerned himself no more about the boy than busy fathers usually did about their young children. He must have been a liberal and agreeable man, if only to keep about him the learned and gifted persons whom his wife may have originally drawn. But, so far as we know, he taught his son nothing but the art of thriving, and this he did without intending it. Such knowledge pervaded the air of the notary's home,

and the boy inhaled it unconsciously. Annuities, reversions, estates, revenues, interest, shares, bonds, mortgages, all of which the son came to understand and handle better than any other literary man of any age, were the stuff out of which his father's business and fortune were made. The old man little thought what an accomplished notary his younger son was learning to be, when he disturbed the clerks assiduously copying in the notarial office, and played with the rolls of parchment. He caught the secret of all that exact and patient industry, though it disgusted him.

Of his sister we know little more than that she was his favorite in the small household, as far as a sister of sixteen might be to a boy of seven. She was married young to one of the numerous officers of the Chamber of Accounts, and became the mother of four children, descendants of whom are still living in France, and have even figured in French politics within living memory. One of her grandsons, M. d'Hornoi, was a member of the House of Deputies in 1827. Her children and grandchildren supplied the sole legitimate domestic element in Voltaire's life, and connected him with his country's social system. To this boy of seven, left motherless, she could be only the good elder sister; not always patient with his whims, not capable of directing his mind, and much absorbed, doubtless, as girls naturally are, with the opening romance of her own life.

Her brother Armand, who was seventeen years of age at the death of their mother, had already imbibed at the seminary of St. Magloire, in Paris, extreme and gloomy views of religion, which he held through life. He touched Voltaire only to repel him. "My Jansenist of a brother," he frequently calls Armand, — a term equivalent to Roman Catholic Calvinist. Credulous, superstitious, austere, devout, Armand passed his days, as many worthy people did in that age, and do in this age, in making virtue odious and repulsive. The contrast which he presents to his brother is not unusual in religious communities, but is seldom so complete and striking as in this instance. It recalls to mind that incongruous brother of John Milton, the long-forgotten Christopher Milton; extreme tory and High Churchman, partisan most zealous of the three Stuarts, knighted and raised to the bench

by James II. Armand Arouet carried his credulity to the point of writing a work defending the Convulsionist miracles, which is said to exist among the Voltaire manuscripts at Petersburgh; and Duvernet assures us that in 1786 there could still be seen, above the pulpit of the church in which Voltaire was baptized, a votive offering, placed there by Armand Arouet in expiation of his brother's unbelief.

This elder brother, then, had little to do with forming the motherless child, except to make him recoil with loathing and contempt from whatever savored of the serious and the elevated.

Among the frequenters of the Arouet home were three persons who enjoyed the ecclesiastical title of abbé without possessing other ecclesiastical quality. In old Paris there were many such, most of them younger sons of noble families, who had taken nominally a course of theology, in case anything good should fall in their way which a secular abbé could enjoy,— a canonicate, or a portion of the revenues of a veritable abbey. In the olden time, it seems, the monks were accustomed to place their convent under the protection of a powerful lord, by electing him their abbé and assigning him a part of their income. From the chief of a great house to a younger son of the same was a natural transition; and hence the swarm of abbés, in semi-clerical garb, more or less endowed with clerical revenue, who figured in French society of that century, — gentlemen of leisure, scholars by profession, and much given as a class to the more decorous audacities of unbelief. The French are not particular in the matter of titles. In the course of time any man in France who had a tincture of the ecclesiastic in him might style himself abbé, — a word that, after all, only means father.

The Abbé Rochebrune was one of these, described by Voltaire himself, in after years, as an agreeable poet, and still known to collectors as the author of a cantata upon the story of Orpheus, which was set to music by Clérambault, a noted composer and organist of Paris. This cantata was performed at court before Louis XIV., with great applause, at a time when such compositions were in the highest vogue.

Nicholas Gédoyn, another of the abbés, was a more im-

portant and more interesting person. Like Rochebrune, he was the scion of an ancient race, a circumstance that gave him a canonicate and a revenue from two abbeys while he was still in the prime of manhood. He had a passion for the classic authors of antiquity, and published free translations of Quintilian and Pausanias, which remained for two generations popular works in France, and are still read. He was one of that antique race of scholars who could not go anywhere without their pocket Horace. He loved his Horace, and wrote a "Conversation" upon him. The titles of his works show the bent of his mind: "Life of Epaminondas," "Roman Urbanity," "The Pleasures of the Table among the Greeks," "Apology for Translations," "The Ancients and the Moderns," "The Judgments of Photius upon the Greek Orators." He also wrote a treatise upon the "Education of Children," that explains in part the warm interest which we know he took in the education of the little François Arouet, whom he influenced powerfully and decisively. Jesuit, canon, and abbé as he was, he was as much pagan as Christian; or, as Voltaire more politely expresses it, in his list of the authors of Louis XIV.'s time: "The Abbé Gédoyn was so warmly enamored of the authors of antiquity that he willingly pardoned their religion in consideration of the beauties of their works and their mythology." The genial abbé had little love of modern authors. He thought the human mind had lapsed and narrowed under Christianity, and that great poetry and great eloquence had passed away with the mythology of the Greeks. Milton's "Paradise Lost" seemed to him a "barbarous poem, of a fanaticism dismal and disgusting, in which the Devil howled without ceasing against the Messiah."

This amiable and enthusiastic scholar, nourished and limited by the literature of the past, loved the child, associated familiarly with him all through his forming years, and breathed into him that love of the ancient models which his works so remarkably exhibit. Gédoyn, like Rochebrune, was interested in music. He goes so far as to say that the moderns cannot in the least appreciate the poems of Pindar, because the music is lost to which they were sung.

Châteauneuf was the third of our abbés, the early guides and tutors of this susceptible spirit. Here we touch music

again, for this abbé has a place in the catalogue of French writers only as the author of a "Treatise upon the Music of the Ancients." The particular tie which bound these abbés together was probably their common regard for Ninon de Lenclos, whose father was an amateur lutist of celebrity and learning, and she was well skilled in the instruments of the time. They were all members of the elegant and distinguished circle which gathered round Ninon in her old age, one charm of whose abode was the excellent music furnished by herself and her guests. The little Arouet had no ear for music, but he had an ear very susceptible and attentive to other lessons taught him by his abbés.

Châteauneuf loved the French classics as much as Gédoyn loved the Greek and Roman; Racine was his favorite among the French poets, who always remained Voltaire's. "Sixty years ago," wrote Voltaire in 1766, "the Abbé de Châteauneuf said to me, 'My child, let the world talk as it will, Racine will gain every day, and Corneille lose.'"

This last lover of Ninon was brother to the Marquis de Châteauneuf, a person of note in the diplomacy of the time, ambassador to Holland and to Turkey at a later day. The abbé was a gay, decorous, and genial man of the world, known in all agreeable circles, and, as St. Simon records, "welcome in the best." In particular, he frequented the opulent and elegant abode of the Abbé de Chaulieu, poet and epicure, who drew thirty thousand francs a year from the revenues of country abbeys, which he spent in Paris, entertaining princes, poets, and literary churchmen. This luxurious ecclesiastic lived near the Arouets, and his house was the door through which the youngest of them was to make his way to the elevated social spheres.

But it was the Abbé Châteauneuf who was the child's first instructor. In his character of godfather, he had promised to see that the boy was duly instructed in religion, and reared in accordance with the laws and usages of the Catholic Church. Voltaire told his intimate friends how his godfather fulfilled this vow. He first made the child read and repeat the rhymed fables of La Fontaine, — new works then, the author having survived till this boy was half a year old. Duvernet mentions a piece by another hand, which, he says, the boy knew by heart

when he was three years of age, — "La Moïsade," a fugitive poem then in great vogue among these gay abbés, who lived upon the revenues of a church which they despised and undermined.

We need not believe that the boy knew this piece by heart at three years of age; but it was among the pieces of verse which he first heard and longest remembered. Such productions, common as they afterwards were, had in 1697 the combined charm of novelty and danger. They circulated in manuscript from hand to hand, and from circle to circle; grave men and famous women copied them into their diaries, where they may still be read, together with those satires and squibs which caused the government of the Bourbons to be described as a despotism tempered by epigrams. This "Moïsade" is a short poem in the deistical taste; its main purport being that all of religion is a device of interested men, excepting alone the doctrine of a Supreme Being. Moses, according to this poet, availed himself of the credulity of the ignorant multitude in order to secure obedience to good laws. It concludes thus: —

"Men vain and fanatical receive, without difficulty, the most chimerical fables. A little word about eternity renders them benign and peaceful; and thus the whole of a stupefied people are reduced to kiss the ligatures that strangle them. By such arts Moses knew how to fix the restless spirit of the Hebrews, and took captive their credulity by ranging his politic laws under the standard of the Divinity. He pretended to have seen upon a distant mountain celestial visions. He gave those rustics to understand that God, in his splendor and majesty, had appeared before his dazzled eyes. Authentic tables he showed them, containing God's will. He supported by pathetic tones a tale so well invented, and the entire people was enchanted with those magnificent fooleries. Cunning falsehood passing for truth established the authority of that legislator, and gave currency to the politic errors by which the world was infected."

Such was the lesson taught the infant Arouet through the instrumentality of his godfather; and probably the whole Arouet household and circle approved it, except his brother Armand. Such was the tone of the circle of abbés, poets, and placemen who lived in the neighborhood, and had to do with the formation of this most susceptible boy, from his infancy to mature age.

There was such a stir in matters religious during the ten years spent at his father's house that so eager and intelligent a boy as he was could not have failed to know something of it. In writing certain passages, half a century later, of his "Age of Louis XIV.," he may have drawn upon his own recollections as a little child. It was about 1702, as he therein records, that a strong feeling arose within the church itself against the filthy relics with which every altar then reeked. Readers who have chanced to see the old English ballad of Cromwell's time, called "A Journey into France," may have supposed that its list of the relics in Notre Dame of Paris was a mere invention of a "natural enemy." Besides a sleeve and a slipper of the Virgin Mary, the poet enumerates among "the sights of Nostre Dame," —

"Her Breasts, her Milk, her very Gown
Which she did weare in Bethlem town,
When in the Inne she lay;
Yet all the world knows that 's a fable,
For so good Cloaths ne'r lay in stable,
Upon a lock of Hay.

"There is one of the Crosses Nails,
Which whoso sees his bonnet vailes,
And if he will, may kneel:
Some say, 't is false, 't was never so,
Yet, feeling it, thus much I know,
It is as true as Steel." [1]

This catalogue of disgust was probably not invented by the poet, for we know that offensive objects, similarly described, were actually exhibited in the chief church of France when François-Marie Arouet was a child in his father's house, near by. It was in 1702, when he was eight years of age, he tells us, that there arose in France a bishop — Gaston-Louis de Noailles — who was brave enough to take from his metropolitan church, at Chalons on the Marne, a relic which had been adored for ages as the navel of Jesus Christ. This bishop had the courage to throw away the monstrous thing.

"All Chalons murmured against the bishop. Presidents, counselors, placemen, royal treasurers, merchants, men of note, canons, priests, protested unanimously, in legal form, against the enterprise of the bishop, demanding the return of the navel, and supporting

[1] Musarum Deliciæ, London, 1656.

their demand by referring to the robe of Jesus Christ preserved at Argenteuil, his handkerchief at Turin and at Laon, one of the nails of the cross at St. Denis, and so many other relics which we preserve and despise, and which do so much wrong to the religion that we revere. But the wise firmness of the bishop carried the day at last over the credulity of the people." [1]

This movement had indeed originated some years before with Jean de Launoi, a famous and learned doctor of Paris, who made such effective war against the falsities of the Roman calendar as to acquire the name of Saint Expeller (*Dénicheur de Saints*). He had the mania to scrutinize the historical claims of popular saints, and, if he found the testimony insufficient, erased them from his list. "He is terrible alike to heaven and earth," says a writer of that day, "for he has tumbled more saints out of Paradise than any ten Popes have put there." A witty priest remarked that whenever Doctor de Launoi came into his parish he made profound reverences to him, for fear he should take away his St. Roch. A country magnate begged him not to harm St. Yon, the patron saint of one of his villages. "How shall I do him any harm," said the Dénicheur, "since I have not the honor to know him?" On another occasion he declared that he did not turn out of heaven the blessed whom God had placed there, but only those whom ignorance and error had slipped in. He held "a Monday" at his house for the discussion of saintly claims and traditions, when he made such havoc of favorite saints, male and female, and turned into ridicule so many pious and romantic fictions, that Louis XIV. asked him to discontinue those assemblies. Witty and gay churchmen laughed at his honest zeal; the king feared it; and so the beginning of reform within the church could not go far.

All this was "in the air" while Voltaire was a little boy at his father's house; and during the whole forming period of his life he lived in the very thick of it. He had also an elder brother in Paris, who made conscientious living ridiculous and offensive.

[1] Siècle de Louis XIV., chap. xxxv.

CHAPTER V.

AT SCHOOL.

THE boy remained at home three years after his mother's death, with his father, sister, and elder brother, instructed in a desultory way by the Abbé Châteauneuf. The family lived liberally and with some elegance, enjoying, as documents attest, a large garden, a summer residence in a suburban village, with a farm adjacent, horses, vehicles, books, an ample income, consideration, and a circle of agreeable friends, whom these alone never command. "I wrote verses from my cradle," Voltaire remarks more than once, and Duvernet adds that Armand Arouet also wrote them, even while both were boys at home. The family, he says, used to amuse themselves by pitting the brothers against one another in verse-making, and the verses of the younger were so good as at first to please and afterwards to alarm his father, who was a man of judgment, and dreaded the development of so unprofitable a talent.

Maître Arouet, like a true French father, had a scheme of life for each of his sons. The elder, as a matter of course, would follow his father's business of notary, and succeed by inheritance to his father's offices. For his younger son he cherished more ambitious views: he designed to make a solicitor or an advocate of him. A notary, in such practice as he enjoyed, would be almost a sufficient patron to a young advocate, and it would be both convenient and advantageous to have a lawyer in the family. We still hear of solicitors in London, in large practice, bringing up a son or a nephew as a barrister, because it is solicitors who choose barristers for their clients. There were also places open to the legal profession in France, procurable by purchase, by interest, or by a blending of the two, which led to the higher magistracy, if not to the court and cabinet of the king.

This father, it is evident, had set his heart upon seeing his younger son enter a career in which he could push him on to fortune with advantage to himself; and to this end he took precisely the course which an opulent father of his rank would adopt at the present time: he sent him to the great school of the day, — the Eton of France, — the Jesuit Collège Louis-le-Grand, attended then by two thousand boys of the most distinguished families in the kingdom. This school, which still exists upon its ancient site in the Rue St. Jacques, in the heart of old Paris, presented almost every attraction which could weigh with a fond or an ambitious parent. The Jesuits were in the highest credit with king, court, and hierarchy, and this school was among their most cherished and important institutions. Years before, when Louis XIV. visited it in state to witness a play performed by the pupils, he let fall an expression which gave it the name it bore, and brought it into the highest fashion. A spectator said, "Everything is admirable here." The king, hearing the remark, responded, "Certainly, it is my college." The next morning, before the dawn of day, the old name of "Collège of Clermont" had disappeared from the gate-way, and in its stead was placed a new name, "Collège Louis-le-Grand."

The urbane and scholarly Jesuits held this king in firm possession. That plain-spoken lady, Madame, mother of the Regent, tells us in her Memoirs that the priests had made the king believe all men damned except those whom Jesuits had instructed. If any one about the court, she adds, wished to ruin a man, he had only to call him a Huguenot or a Jansenist, and his business was done. Her son, the Duke of Orleans, desired to take a gentleman into his service who had been accused of Jansenism. "Why, nephew," said the king, "do you think of such a thing as receiving a Jansenist into your service?" The prince replied, "I can positively assure your majesty that he is no Jansenist. It is rather to be feared that he does not even believe in God." "Oh," said the king, "if that 's all, and you give me your word he 's no Jansenist, take him." It is doubtful if Maître Arouet thought better of the Jansenists than the king, since his son Armand had come from their teaching a narrow and cheerless devotee.

It was in the autumn of 1704, a few weeks after the battle

of Blenheim, that François-Marie Arouet, aged ten years, was placed in this famous school. His home was within an easy walk of the miscellaneous aggregation of buildings belonging to the college in the Rue St. Jacques, on the southern side of the Seine; but his father, left a widower three years before, had given away his only daughter in marriage, and therefore entered his son among the boarders, five hundred in number.

The child was not turned loose among this great crowd of boys, to make his way as best he could. There were privileges which wealth could buy, and Maître Arouet provided for his son one of the most valuable of these. The price of board and tuition was four hundred francs a year; which entitled the pupil to no special care or comfort. A prince, or indeed any man who chose to pay the extra cost, could establish his son in a private room, and provide him with a servant and tutor; and there were usually thirty or forty boys in the college thus favored. The private rooms were in such request that it was necessary to speak for one of them years before it was wanted. There were thirty or forty larger rooms for groups of five, six, or seven pupils, each group under the care of a *préfet*, a priest, who served them as father and tutor, aiding them in their lessons, and keeping them from harm. It was in one of these groups that Maître Arouet placed his child, under the care of Father Thoulier, a young priest (twenty-two in 1704) of noted family and attainments. What better could a generous father do for a promising, motherless boy of ten in the Paris of 1704? Clad in a scholar's modest frock and cap, brown-haired, bright-eyed, not robust, already practiced in gay mockery of things revered, François Arouet took his place in that swarm of French boys of the Collège Louis-le-Grand. There he remained for seven years, and it was his only school.

We must think of it simply as a boys' school, not a college; a humming, bustling hive of boys, given to mischief, and liable to the most primitive punishments when detected in the same. It was while Voltaire was a pupil that the Duke de Boufflers and the Marquis d'Argenson conspired with other boys to blow a pop-gun volley of peas at the nose of the unpopular professor, Father Lejay, and were condemned to be flogged for the outrage. The marquis, a boy of seventeen,

the son of a king's minister, managed to escape; but the younger duke, though he was named "Governor of Flanders" and colonel of a regiment, was obliged to submit to the punishment. Voltaire, too, speaks of his *préfet* giving him and his comrades some slaps *sur les fesses* by way of amusement.[1] The discipline, however, was far from being severe, and there was evidently a friendly sympathy between pupils and teachers, which, in the case of Voltaire, survived school-days.

In no important particular did this school differ from a Jesuit school of the present moment, such as we may visit in Rome, Vienna, Montreal, New York. Sixty years after leaving it, Voltaire recalled to mind the picture, twelve feet square, which adorned one of its halls, of St. Ignatius and St. Xavier going to heaven in a resplendent chariot drawn by four white horses, the Father Eternal visible on high, wearing a beautiful white beard flowing to his waist, the Virgin and her Son by his side, the Holy Spirit beneath in the form of a dove, and a choir of angels waiting with joined hands and bowed heads to receive the illustrious fathers of the order.[2] He remembered, too, that if any one in France had presumed to ridicule this childish legend, the reverend Père la Chaise, confessor of the king, would have had the scoffer in the Bastille with promptitude. Just such pictures still hang in many a school, and the general view of the universe intended to be inculcated by them is not materially changed. But the Bastille is gone, and the power of Père la Chaise is diminished.

The boy took his place in the lowest class, the sixth, and began his *Rosa, la Rose*, in the crabbed old "Rudimenta" of Despautères, written in Latin, and stuffed with needless difficulties of the good old-fashioned kind. At many schools a better book was used, written in French, and every way more suitable; but no Jesuit of that generation would adopt it because it was written by the Fathers of Port Royal, odious Jansenists! In Greek he was given a little book of easy sentences, by Jean Stobée, a compiler who lived in the fourth century; and this was followed, in his second year, by a selection of Æsop's Fables. Early in the course he was set to reading the Latin poems of Father Commire, who put into such

[1] 88 Œuvres de Voltaire, 261.
[2] 55 Œuvres de Voltaire, 280.

hexameters as he could command the stories of Jonah, Daniel, and the Immaculate Conception, for the edification of youth; also, some pompous eulogies of the Virgin Mary. And so he worked his way up through all the classes, meeting every day similar incongruities, at the recollection of which he laughed all his life: Epictetus one hour, and St. Basil's Homilies the next; now Lucian, now St. Chrysostom; Virgil in the morning, Commire in the afternoon; Cicero alternating with Father Lejay's Latin Life of Joseph; Sallust followed by a Psalm of David, in what he calls "kitchen Latin;" the college course being that wondrous mixture of the two Romes — Cicero's Rome and the Pope's Rome, both imperial — which for ages constituted polite education. The teachers were amiable and worthy gentlemen, who did the best they knew for their pupils. It merely happened that they now had a pupil in whom the ingredients would not mix.

The most gifted boy, in the most favorable circumstances, can only make a fair beginning of education from ten to seventeen. Voltaire, at the end of his course, could not have entered such universities as Oxford, Cambridge, Berlin, and Harvard are now. He may have had Latin enough, but not half enough Greek; no modern language but his own; scarcely any tincture of mathematics; no modern history; no science; not even a tolerable outline of geography. The school-books still held to the ancient theory that rivers were formed by the ocean running into deep caverns under the mountains; and if any of the fathers had yet heard of the new astronomy of Professor Isaac Newton (adopted at Oxford in 1704, Voltaire's first year at school), they had heard of it only to reject it as heresy. He did not learn the most remarkable events even of French history, unless he learned them out of class. "I did not," he intimates, "know that Francis I. was taken prisoner at Pavia, nor where Pavia was; the very land of my birth was unknown to me. I knew neither the constitution nor the interests of my country; not a word of mathematics, not a word of sound philosophy. I learned Latin and nonsense." [1]

We have a work upon education by Jouvency, a Jesuit father of that generation, in which no mention is made of geography, history, mathematics, or science. Much Latin,

[1] 54 Œuvres de Voltaire, 209.

a little Greek, and plenty of what Voltaire called nonsense (*sottises*) made up the mental diet of the pupils of the Collège Louis-le-Grand.

The main strength of the worthy fathers was expended in teaching their pupils to use words with effect and grace. The nonsense (*les sottises*) was a necessity of their time and vocation. Grave and learned men could still gravely and learnedly discourse upon the grades of angels, the precise difference between a "throne" and a "dominion," the language employed by Adam and Eve, the parents of Melchisedech, and the spot whence Enoch had been translated to heaven. Boys could not escape such *sottises;* but in a fashionable school of the learned and courtly Jesuits they were taught with more of formality and routine than among Jansenist orders, who were rude enough to take such things seriously.

Literary skill was what this boy acquired at school, and scarcely any other good thing. He studied and loved Virgil, his "idol and master." He studied and loved Horace, the model of much of his maturest verse. He loved to recall, in later years, the happy hour when, as a school-boy, he came upon that passage of Cicero's oration on behalf of the poet Archias, which has been a favorite sentence with school-boys for many a century: "Studies nourish youth, cheer old age, adorn prosperity, console adversity, delight at home, are no impediment abroad, remain with us through the night, accompany us when we travel, and go with us into the country." In a letter to Madame du Châtelet, written in the first warmth of their affection, he speaks of having often repeated to her those words, which, he says, he early adopted as his own.[1] He speaks more than once, in his letters, of his boyish sensibility to the charms of poetry, — his first passion and his last. Hebrew he mentions having tried in vain to learn. In a letter of 1767, in repudiating the doctrine of the natural equality of minds, he adduces his own incapacities: "As early as my twelfth year I was aware of the prodigious number of things for which I had no talent. I knew that my organism was not formed to go very far in mathematics. I have proved that I have no capacity for music. God has said to each man, Thus far shalt thou go, and no farther. I had some natural power

[1] Œuvres de Voltaire, 112.

to acquire modern languages; none for the Oriental. We cannot all do all things." [1]

His teachers seemed chosen to nourish his reigning tastes. Father Thoulier, his tutor, known afterwards as Abbé d'Olivet, was one of the most enthusiastic and accomplished Latinists in Europe, his translations of Cicero remaining classic to this day in France. He spent a long life in the study of Roman literature, his love for which had originally drawn him into the order, against the wishes of his family. "Read Cicero! Read Cicero!" he exclaimed in a public address; and these words, as one of his biographers remarks, were the moral of his life. He could almost have added, "Read nothing but Cicero!" He was a familiar, genial teacher, whom Voltaire, half a century later, used to address as "my dear Cicero;" and the abbé would return the compliment by telling his pupil that he was tired of men, and passed his days "with a Virgil, a Terence, a Molière, a Voltaire." In his latest years he became a kind of literary bigot, vaunting his favorite authors and reviling the favorites of others. He was in the ardor and buoyancy of youth when he breathed into this susceptible boy the love of Cicero, and gave him familiar slaps by way of amusement.

But the *préfet* only saw him safely to the door of the classrooms. His chief professor of Latin was Father Porée, whose labor of love was to write Latin plays for the boys to perform, some of which are still occasionally presented in French schools.[2] M. Pierron declares that he shall not to his dying day forget the "prodigious *ennui*" that he endured in reading these productions, characterized, as he remarks, by inanity

[1] 2 Lettres Inédites de Voltaire, 560.

[2] One of the Latin plays of Father Porée was performed at Boston, Mass., at the Commencement of Boston College, June 27, 1877. It was called Philedonus, or the Romance of a Poor Young Man, the argument of which was given thus: While pursuing his studies in Paris, Philedonus neglects his religious duties, and yields to the fascinations of the luxurious capital. Learning that his friend, Erastus, is dangerously ill, Philedonus becomes the victim of melancholy, and no longer listens to the voice of the tempter. Through the salutary influence of a heavenly vision, in which his mother and a guardian angel appear, and partially arouse the long-dormant energies of his better nature, the student resolves to amend. Various circumstances — among others the dying curse of Erastus — strengthen the good resolutions of Philedonus, who at length escapes from the toils of parasites plotting to effect his ruin, reforms his companions, and returns to his home in Italy.

of conception, absence of interest, puerility of style, and jests in bad taste.[1] They were, however, sufficient for their purpose, and gave the author a great reputation. He was a handsome, imposing, fluent, and agreeable man, who knew how to hold his classes attentive, and to adorn the platform on state occasions. Voltaire speaks of Father Porée with respect and fondness thirty years after leaving school, when his old master was at the head of the college.

It was Father Porée who said of the boy that "he loved to weigh in his little scales the great interests of Europe;" which calls to mind a remark of his own, written half a century later: "In my infancy I knew a canon of Péronne, aged ninety-two, who was reared by one of the most infuriate commoners of The League. He always said [in speaking of the assassin of Henry IV.], '*the late Monsieur de Ravaillac.*'"[2] Being at a Jesuit college, he could not fail to hear something, from time to time, of the wondrous attempts of the Jesuits in Canada, made familiar to modern readers through the works of Dr. Francis Parkman. He even knew a M. Brébeuf, grand-nephew of that Father Brébeuf, martyr, bravest of the brave, whom Dr. Parkman has so nobly delineated in his "Jesuits in North America." Voltaire heard from M. Brébeuf an anecdote that may have come from the missionary's lips: "He told me that his grand-uncle, the Jesuit, having converted a pretty little Canadian boy, the tribe, much offended, roasted the child, ate him, and gave a choice portion [*une fesse*] to the reverend Father Brébeuf, who, to get out of the scrape, said it was a fast with him that day."[3]

From such slight indications as these we can infer that, little as the fathers may have formally taught him of modern history, he was not inattentive to the events of his time, and gained some knowledge of the heroic ages of France.

A comrade of Porée was Father Tournemine, an inmate of the Collège Louis-le-Grand, though not officially connected with it. He conducted a monthly magazine for the Jesuits, a kind of repository of historical memoirs and pious miscellany. He was a doting lover of such literature as he liked, a man of

[1] Voltaire et ses Maitres, page 77.
[2] 58 Œuvres de Voltaire, 7.
[3] 37 Œuvres de Voltaire, 146.

the world, a genial, easy companion to young and old, and held in high esteem in the college as literary ornament and arbiter. Between this editor and young Arouet there grew an attachment which lasted many years beyond the college course of the boy, and influenced both their lives. "While his comrades," says Duvernet, "strengthened their constitutions, though thinking only of amusing themselves, in games, races, and other bodily exercises, Voltaire withdrew from the playground to go and strengthen his mind in conversation with Fathers Tournemine and Porée, with whom he passed most of his leisure; and he was accustomed to say to those who rallied him upon his indifference to the pleasures natural to his age, 'Every one jumps and every one amuses himself in his own way.'"

It so chanced that Tournemine was as strenuous a partisan of Corneille as Abbé Châteauneuf was of Racine, whom the Jesuits held to be a Jansenist, and therefore neither poet nor Christian. "In my infancy," says Voltaire, in his edition of Corneille, "Father Tournemine, a Jesuit, an extreme partisan of Corneille, and an enemy of Racine, whom he deemed a Jansenist, made me remark this passage [Agesilaus to Lysander], which he preferred to all the pieces of Racine." The passage amply justifies the remark which the commentator adds: "Thus prejudice corrupts the taste, as it perverts the judgment, in all the concerns of life."[1] Nevertheless, that very prejudice of the amiable Jesuit may have served the pupil as a provocative; and we can easily fancy this boy defending his favorite dramatist against the attacks of the fathers, aiming at them the arguments he had heard at home from his mentor, Abbé Châteauneuf.

In a large school there must be, of course, the unpopular teacher, who is not always the least worthy one. Father Lejay, professor of rhetoric of many years' standing, filled this "rôle" in the Collège Louis-le-Grand. He was a strict, zealous, disagreeable formalist; "a good Jesuit," devoted to his order, who composed and compiled many large volumes, still to be seen in French libraries; a dull, plodding, ambitious man, with an ingredient in his composition of that quality which has given to the word *Jesuit* its peculiar meaning in

[1] 67 Œuvres de Voltaire, 301.

modern languages. He wrote a book of pious sentences for Every Day of the Week, and a discourse upon the "Triumph of Religion under Louis XIV." He translated and annotated the "Roman Antiquities" of Denys of Halicarnassus, compiled a vast work upon rhetoric, wrote upon the "Duties of a Christian with Regard to Faith and Conduct," wrote tragedies and comedies in Latin and in French, which were played at the college by the boys, with the "success" that invariably attends such performances. These dramas of the professor of rhetoric, which are described by a French explorer as among the curiosities of inanity, reveal the interesting fact that Father Lejay had a particular antipathy to "philosophers," and knew very well how to flatter Louis XIV. by abusing them. He was indeed much given to politic flattery, each of his works being dedicated to some great man of the hour whom his order or himself was interested to conciliate.

Plays were often performed at this school. One of the first comedies presented after the entrance of François Arouet was Lejay's "Damocles," in which the friend of Dionysius is held up to scorn as a "philosopher," and the tyrant is presented to the admiration of the auditors as an ancient Louis XIV. Damocles is remarkable for the flowing amplitude of his beard, in which his foolish soul delights, and his favorite saying is, "Nations will never be happy until kings become philosophers, or philosophers kings." The king says, at length, "Very well, be it so; reign in my place." Damocles reigns. He commits every imbecile folly which the crude mind of Father Lejay could imagine or boys laugh at. The people rise against the "philosopher," and recall Dionysius, who tears the royal mantle from Damocles, and dooms him to lose his noble beard, more precious to him than life. The crowning scene is the last, in which a barber, with abundant ceremony and endless comic incident, cuts off the beard, amid applause that shook the solid walls of the college.[1] It was only with Father Lejay that the young Arouet was not in pleasant accord during the seven years of his school life. The anecdote of their collision, vaguely related by Duvernet, came doubtless from Voltaire himself, even to some of the words which Duvernet employs in telling it: —

[1] Voltaire et ses Maîtres, page 108.

"Among the professors, who were very much attached to him, Father Lejay, a man of mediocre ability, vain, jealous, and held in little esteem by his colleagues, was the only one whose good-will Voltaire could not win. He was professor of eloquence, and, like most of those who plume themselves upon that gift, he was very little eloquent. He was regarded as the Cotin [1] of orators. Voltaire had with him some literary discussions; the master felt himself humiliated by his pupil, and this was the source of that antipathy which Father Lejay had for Voltaire, — a feeling which he could not conquer, nor even disguise. One day, the pupil, exasperated by the professor, gave him a retort of a certain kind, which ought not to have been provoked, and which it had been discreet in the instructor not to notice. Father Lejay, in his rage, descends from his platform, runs to him, seizes him by the collar, and, rudely shaking him, cries out several times, 'Wretch! You will one day be the standard-bearer of deism in France!'"

Such a scene would not, in that age, have injured the audacious boy in the opinion of his comrades. It might even have made him the hero of a day; for it was of this period that Madame of Orleans wrote, when she entered in her diary, "Religious belief is so completely extinct in this country that one seldom meets a young man who does not wish to pass himself off as an atheist. But the oddest part of it is that the very person who professes atheism in Paris plays the saint at court."

[1] A pompous and arrogant court preacher of Louis XIII.'s time, satirized by Boileau and Molière.

CHAPTER VI.

THE SCHOOL POET.

All things pressed this boy toward the path he was to follow. Every influence to which he was subjected, whether within or without the college, stimulated the development of his peculiar aptitudes.

In the France of Louis XIV. there were five illustrious names that did not belong to men of rank in church or state, and they were all the names of poets: Corneille, Racine, Molière, Boileau, and J. B. Rousseau. These alone of the commoners of France could be supposed worthy to be guests at great houses, and sit with princes in the king's presence. These five: Corneille, a lawyer's son; Racine and Boileau, sons of small placemen; Molière, the son of a Paris upholsterer; J. B. Rousseau, the child of the Arouet family's shoemaker. The boy Rousseau may have carried home shoes to the notary's house; but the proudest head in France was proud to bow to Rousseau the poet. The diaries of that generation attest the estimation in which the verse-making art was held, and the great number of persons who tried their hands at it. Verse was the one road to glory open to nameless youth, the career of arms being an exclusive preserve of feudal rank.

We have seen that the professors with whom this lad had most to do wrote plays in prose and in verse. The performance of those works on the great days of the school year absorbed such an amount of time and toil that we might suppose the college a training-school of actors. There was the little drama and the grand drama: the first consisting of farces and burlesques, in Latin or in French, or in both; the second of tragedies, in Latin. The little drama was presented in one of the college halls a few days before the end of the school year, and was witnessed only by the inmates;

the plays being short, the comic effects simple, and the mounting inexpensive. The grand drama, reserved for the final day, when the prizes were given, — the solemn day of judgment of a French school, — was given in the great court of the college, converted for the occasion into a vast tent. The play was usually in five acts, and "entire months" were employed in drilling the young performers, rehearsing the play, and preparing the scenes. The stage was set up at the further end of the court, opposite the great gate-way, and the interior was all gay with banners, flags, streamers, tapestry, emblems, devices, and mottoes. The families of the pupils were invited, and places of honor were reserved for the chiefs of the Jesuit order, for bishops and archbishops, and for members of the royal family; the king himself being sometimes present. The five-act Latin play, on some subject of classic antiquity, was the prelude to the great event of the occasion, the distribution of the prizes; and as the performers were generally the boys who were to receive prizes, it was a day of intoxicating glory to them, the applause bestowed upon the actor being renewed and emphasized when he stood up to receive the public recognition of a year's good conduct. On some occasions there was a mock trial, and the reading of poems composed by the pupils. The acting of charades was also a part of the school festivities, and they were performed very much as we do them now at holiday times, although with more formality.[1]

If these provocatives to literature were not sufficient, there were Literary Societies in the institution, not unlike those of American colleges at the present time. These were styled in the Jesuit schools of that period "Academies;" and, as the Jesuits invented them, no reader needs to be told that the sessions were presided over by one of the father professors. In other respects, there was no material difference between the Academy for which François Arouet composed and declaimed and any Gamma-Delta society of an American college of the present time. The members debated, read poems of their own composition, declaimed those of others, and did all those acts and things which readers remember as part of their own joyous school experience. The tradition of the college is that

[1] Voltaire et ses Maîtres, page 28, etc.

the violent scene with Father Lejay, just related, occurred, not in class, as Duvernet has it, but during a debate in the Academy, Lejay presiding.

Thus stimulated to productivity young Arouet soon became, and to the end of his course remained, the prodigy of the Collège Louis-le-Grand. Some of his early spurts of verse have been preserved. Father Porée, being surprised one day by the end of the hour, and having no time to dictate a theme, hastily said, as the bell summoned the class away, "Make Nero speak at the moment when he is about to kill himself." The boy handed in these lines: —

"De la mort d'une mère exécrable complice,
Si je meurs de ma main, je l'ai bien mérité;
Et, n'ayant jamais fait qu'actes de cruauté,
J'ai voulu, me tuant, en faire un de justice."[1]

On another occasion, in the same class, he amused himself by throwing up and catching a snuff-box. Father Porée took it from him, and required him to redeem it by composing some verses. He produced the following: —

SUR UNE TABATIÈRE CONFISQUÉE.

Adieu, ma pauvre tabatière;
Adieu, je ne te verrai plus;
Ni soins, ni larmes, ni prière,
Ne te rendront à moi; mes efforts sont perdus.
Adieu, ma pauvre tabatière;
Adieu, doux fruit de mes écus!
S'il faut à prix d'argent te racheter encore,
J'irai plutôt vider les trésors de Plutus.
Mais ce n'est pas ce dieu que l'on veut que j'implore;
Pour te revoir, hélas! il faut prier Phébus.
Qu'on oppose entre nous une forte barrière!
Me demander des vers! hélas! je n'en puis plus.
Adieu, ma pauvre tabatière;
Adieu, je ne te verrai plus.[2]

[1] Of the death of a mother the execrable accomplice, if I die by my own hand, I have deserved it well; and, having until now done only acts of cruelty, I have wished, in killing myself, to do one of justice.

[2] UPON A CONFISCATED SNUFF-BOX.

Adieu, my poor snuff-box; adieu, I shall never see thee more; nor pains, nor tears, nor prayer will give thee back to me; my efforts are lost. Adieu, my poor snuff-box; adieu, sweet fruit of my crowns. If money was the price of thy redemption, I would rather go and empty the treasury of Plutus. But it is not that god whom I am required to implore. To get a sight of thee again, I must, alas! address a prayer to Phœbus. What an obstacle is interposed between us! To ask verses of me! Alas! I can produce no more of them. Adieu, my poor snuff-box; I shall never see thee more.

Other light verses, composed in his earlier school years, have been preserved; but these will suffice to show that, while still a child, he had a degree of the literary tact of which he was afterwards a master. As if to make amends to Father Lejay, he translated into French verse a Latin poem of that professor, of a hundred lines or more, upon Sainte Geneviève, always a very popular saint in Paris, even to this day. The poem is of the purest orthodoxy. A more popular effort among his comrades was a translation into four French lines of an old Latin stanza upon bell-ringers, in which the poet gives utterance to a desire, common to students, that the rope held in the hand of the ringer might be twisted around his neck.

It is not possible to fix the date of these poems, but we are sure of one thing: before he was eleven years of age, and before he had been at school a year, he was recognized and shown as a wonder of precocious talent. We are sure of this, because it was in the character of a wondrous boy-poet that Abbé Châteauneuf presented him to a personage still more wondrous, Mademoiselle Ninon de Lenclos, then in her ninetieth year, but still the centre of a brilliant circle. She died in October, 1705, when François Arouet was not quite eleven years of age. Ladies of the highest rank, we are assured, paid court to this anomalous being, and besought her, even in extreme old age, to "form" their sons by permitting them to frequent her evening parties. An uncomely young dandy having boasted that he had been "formed" by her, she said, "I am like God, who repented that he had made man." Molière consulted her upon his comedies, and caught from her conversation some traits of his masterpiece, Tartuffe. She lived in elegance and luxury all her days, courted by the courted, admired by the admired, envied by the envied, sung by poets, loved by priests, reprobated, so far as we can perceive, by no one.

And who was Ninon de Lenclos? She was a country beauty, the child of gentle parents: her mother a good Catholic; her father a "philosopher" of the sect of Epicurus, who taught her early that there ought not to be one moral law for the male of our species, and another for the female. She believed him, and inferred that there was no moral law for either. At seventeen she became the mistress of the Cardinal

de Richelieu, who gave her a pension for life of two thousand francs a year, a competence at that period, upon which she set up in the vocation of *Épicurienne*. Ninon was "an honest man," says a French writer, "because she only had one lover at a time." But she changed them so suddenly that she was unable herself to decide a claim to the paternity of one of her children, and the two contestants decided the matter by a cast of the dice. The boy who thus won a father rose to high rank in the French navy, and died in battle.

An anecdote more astounding is related of her by Voltaire, who doubtless heard it from the Abbé de Châteauneuf. Near the gate St. Antoine there was a restaurant, much frequented by "honest people," like Mademoiselle de Lenclos and her abbé. One evening, after supper there, a young man of nineteen, who had been one of the party, met her in the garden, and made such importunate love to her that she was obliged to tell him that she was his mother. The young man, who had come to the place on horseback, took a pistol from his holsters and shot himself dead in the garden. This tragic event made her "a little more serious," but it did not change her way of life, nor lower her in the regard of her friends.

She was a strict observer of the proprieties of life, took such care of her fortune as to quadruple the income her first lover assigned her, and gradually drew around her the most agreeable and distinguished people in the kingdom, — ladies as well as men. For seventy years she held her ground: admired at first for her beauty, grace, and hereditary musical gifts; admired later for her "prudence," her "judgment," her good nature, her social talents, and her sure taste in literature. She is said to have held in contempt and abhorrence certain foibles occasionally noticed in other women, such as falsehood, jealousy, malice, and ill-temper. Friendship she deemed a precious and sacred thing; but as to love, she looked upon it, says Voltaire, as a mere pastime, imposing no moral obligations; and it was her boast that her lovers remained her friends and the friends of one another. The father of the young man who shot himself abandoned Madame de Maintenon (afterwards the king's wife) to pay court to Ninon, and yet madame remained her friend, and pressed her to come and live in the palace, and help amuse her unamusable old king. She used to say that she had never offered but one prayer,

"My God, make me an honest man, but never an honest woman." [1]

All this being scarcely conceivable by us, it were of no avail to enlarge upon it. To feel the full force of the contrast between the social laws of two contemporary communities, both called Christian, we have only to reflect that this was the period assigned by Hawthorne to the incidents of the "Scarlet Letter."

She was "as dry as a mummy" when the little poet was taken to see her, — "a wrinkled, decrepit creature, who had nothing upon her bones but a yellow skin that was turning black." He gives this account of their meeting: —

"I had written some verses, which were of no value, but seemed very good for my age. Mademoiselle de Lenclos had formerly known my mother, who was much attached to the Abbé de Châteauneuf; and thus it was found a pleasant thing to take me to see her. The abbé was master of her house; it was he who had finished the amorous history of that singular person. He was one of those men who do not require the attraction of youth in women; and the charms of her society had upon him the effect of beauty. She made him languish two or three days; and the abbé having asked her why she had held out so long, she replied that she had wished to wait until her birthday for so beautiful a gala; and on that day she was just seventy. She did not carry the jest very far, and the Abbé de Châteauneuf remained her intimate friend. For my part, I was presented to her a little later; she was then eighty-five [eighty-nine]. It pleased her to put me in her will; she left me two thousand francs to buy books with. Her death occurred soon after my visit."

This legacy, which, as Voltaire more than once records, was punctually paid, confirms the version of the Abbé Duvernet, who says that the aged Ninon was delighted with the boy. Her house, in the Rue des Tournelles, was, he assures us, "a school of good breeding, and the rendezvous of philosophers and wits, whom she knew how to please and interest even in her decrepitude." All pleased her in the lad, — his confidence, his repartees, and, above all, his information. She questioned him upon the topic of the day, — the deadly feud between the sincere, austere Jansenists and the politic, scholarly Jesuits, then approaching its climax in the destruction of Port Royal. Doubtless he had his little say upon that subject, and

[1] 63 Œuvres de Voltaire, 163.

spoke in the "decided tone" which the abbé mentions. Ninon, he remarks, "saw in him the germ of a great man; and it was to warm that germ into life that she left him the legacy to buy books, — a gift at once the most flattering and the most useful to a young man whose sole passion was to instruct himself."

The legacy was indeed most flattering. What a stimulus to a susceptible boy of eleven, already conscious of his powers, and living in the midst of a society who assumed that the composition of good French verse was among the most glorious of all possible feats of the mind! The next year, being in the fifth class, he began a tragedy upon the story, told in Livy, of Amulius, king of Alba, the wicked uncle of those babes in the woods, Romulus and Remus. He called his play "Amulius and Numitor." He kept it many years among his papers, but threw it at length into the fire.

While still in the fifth class his fame reached the court. An invalid soldier, who had served under the immediate command of the king's only son and heir, came to the college one day, and asked the regent to write for him a petition in verse to the prince for aid in his sickness and poverty. The regent referred him to Arouet, who wrote twenty lines for him in half an hour. He made the old soldier address the prince as "the worthy son of the greatest of kings," his love, the people's hope, "who, without reigning over France, reigned over the hearts of the French." "Will you permit me," ran the petition, "to present a new year's gift to you, who only receive them from the hand of the gods? At your birth, they say, Mars gave you valor, Minerva wisdom, Apollo beauty; but a god more powerful, whom in my anguish I implore, designed to bestow new year gifts upon me in giving you liberality." The petition brought a few golden louis to the soldier, and made some little noise at Versailles and Paris. It is said also to have renewed the alarm of his father, lest so much flattery bestowed upon a casual exertion of his son's talents should lure him from the path which leads to rich clients and liberal fees. This versified petition was the best of his school poems that has been preserved, and was really turned with much elegance and ingenuity. For a boy of twelve to devise a compliment for Louis XIV. or his race, after half a century of incense, that should attract a moment's attention from king or court must certainly be accounted a kind of triumph.

He did not neglect the ordinary studies of the school. At the close of his sixth year, in August, 1710, on the day of the distribution of prizes, he enjoyed extraordinary honors. Prize after prize, crown after crown (if we may believe tradition), was awarded him, until he was covered with crowns and staggered under the weight of his prize books. Among the guests in the grand pavilion was the poet J. B. Rousseau, then in the prime of manhood, the lustre of his fame undimmed. The name of François-Marie Arouet caught his ear, and he asked one of the fathers if the lad was the son of Maître Arouet, of the Chamber of Accounts, whom he knew. The professor said he was, and that he had shown for some years a marvelous talent for poetry. Then the professor took the boy by the hand, all covered with crowns and laden with glory, and presented him to the poet. Rousseau kissed him on both cheeks, as the French do at such times, congratulated him warmly upon the honors he had received, and foretold for him a brilliant future. The scholar, with equal enthusiasm, threw his arms around the poet's neck, amid the emotion and applause of the assembly.

And so he went on, triumphantly and happily, to the end of his seven years' course; a good scholar, a favorite of his teachers, admired by all his companions, and by some of them beloved. His friends at school remained his friends as long as they lived, and some of them lived to witness and to solace his last days. The warmest, tenderest, and longest friendships of his life were formed at the Collège Louis-le-Grand, and his instructors followed his career with interest and pride, despite the human foibles and the French faults that marred it. There is no question that his life at school was happy and honorable, and both in a high degree. He made the most of his chances there, such as they were.

These seven years, so brilliant and so fortunate for him in the safe seclusion of a school, were the darkest France had known since the time of Jeanne Darc; for it was then that the French people had to pay large installments of the penalty of enduring for half a century an ignorant and incompetent king. The defeat of Blenheim, in Arouet's first year at school, was followed by that of Ramilies in 1706, while he was writing his tragedy upon the bad uncle of Romulus and Remus. Defeat

followed defeat, until in 1709 occurred the crowning disaster of Malplaquet. There were times, as this boy remembered, when Paris itself dreaded the victor's approach ; and he never forgot the famine of 1709, when, besides the catastrophe of Malplaquet, the olives failed, the fruit trees were nipped by frost, the harvest was ruined, the British fleet captured the grain ships coming from the East, and the cold of the winter was extreme. His father had to pay a hundred francs extra for him at the college that year, and yet he had to eat brown bread. Probably he meant oaten bread, which Madame de Maintenon set the example of eating at Versailles. The king sent to the mint that year four hundred thousand francs' worth of gold plate, and there was a general melting of silver plate from great houses.

The old king had his share of sorrow and humiliation. It was in April, 1711, young Arouet's last year at school, that the series of deaths began in the royal family, the mere recollection of which, many years after, brought tears to susceptible French eyes. The king's only son, the dauphin, died of small-pox in that month. The next February *his* son, the new dauphin, died ; and, three weeks after, *his* son, leaving to France only a boy of two years, " within two fingers of death," who became Louis XV. Paris saw father, mother, and son all borne to the tomb in the same hearse. The hardest hearts, the wisest heads, forgave the stricken king for the woes unnumbered he had brought upon his country through his subservience to priests. Our young student, when he came, half a century later, to treat of these events, in his " Age of Louis XIV.," wrote, " This time of desolation left in the hearts of men an impression so profound that, during the minority of Louis XV., I knew several persons who could not speak of these losses without tears." [1]

He remembered, also, that at the period when Marlborough seemed about to come thundering at the gates of Paris, the minds of men were distracted by what seem to us trifling religious disputes. But at that time nothing was trifling that savored of religion, for behind it all there was the dungeon, the torture-chamber, the bayonet, the axe, the wheel, the fagot. He remembered that, about the time when he was crowned and applauded in the presence of Rousseau, a Jewess and her daugh-

[1] 26 Œuvres de Voltaire, 376.

ter were burned at Lisbon for some trivial act of eating lamb at the season when priests said meat must not be eaten. The story circulated in the school that the girl was ravishingly beautiful, but he declares that it was not her beauty that drew the tears from his eyes when he heard the tale.

And at that very time, perhaps at the moment when the young poet heard his name called in the splendid pavilion, the light of victory may have gleamed in the eyes of every Jesuit in Paris on account of the destruction of the convent of Port Royal, near Versailles. The fundamental article of religion with Louis XIV. was the royal authority, and hence he regarded heresy as rebellion. Long he hesitated before proceeding to extremities with the Jansenist ladies of Port Royal in the Fields, so renowned were they for piety and good works, so revered by the solid men of Paris. But his confessor, Tellier, gave him no peace, and the bewildered old king sent a confidential servant of his household to the convent to see what manner of persons its inmates were. "By my faith, sire," said the man on his return, "I saw there nothing but saints, male and female." The king sighed, and said nothing. The confessor, divining his thought, assured him that there was nothing in the world so dangerous as the virtues with which the poison of heresy was frequently covered. The fatal order was given. The ladies were distributed among the convents of the kingdom, and their abode was utterly destroyed, so that not one stone remained upon another.[1]

Young Arouet could not escape a knowledge of these events, so dear to every Jesuit. In the very street in which his college was situated there was the Abbey of Port Royal of Paris, a kindred establishment to the one near Versailles. He lived close to these events, and was old enough to feel the infinite frivolity of the dispute which a priest could use as a pretext for such atrocities. During his last year at school, 1711, he may have seen men digging up the bones of the eminent persons buried near the destroyed convent, and conveying them to a village church-yard near by; and, during his whole school life, the soldiers of the king were hunting Protestants in the mountains of Cévennes for magistrates to break upon the wheel, to hang upon gibbets, to put to the torture, and burn at the stake.

[1] Mémoires Secrets, par Duclos.

CHAPTER VII.

WILD OATS.

After the poetry of school comes the prose of life. Youth, young companions, zealous and friendly teachers, mental food composed chiefly of the sweets and dainties of three or four literatures, render school and college a land of enchantment, compared with which the ordinary life of man, with its unromantic duties and jostling indifference, seems at first a cheerless highway. It seems such even to an ordinary student, who has won no crowns, written no verses, and had no legacy left him by a famous personage. But this boy was the young Voltaire, who, at ten, had gone from a notary's abode to associate familiarly for seven years with the sons of grand seigneurs, colonels and governors from their cradles, and destined to all kinds of alluring brilliancies. And he had gained a kind of triumph over them. He had discovered that he had something within him which could hold its own, in favorable circumstances, against stars and titles.

In August, 1711, when he left school, he was nearly seventeen, tall for his age, not handsome, having only one decided beauty, — brilliant, piercing eyes, which strangers always remarked. The Jesuit fathers took great pains to form the manners of their pupils, and this lad had profited by it. He was always nice in his person and in his personal habits, particular to have about him the more elegant conveniences of the toilette, and keenly alive to the importance of being agreeable. The flashing quickness of his mind rendered his conversation at all times interesting, and gave him a talent for repartee which the French at that time excessively overvalued. From his twelfth to his eighty-fourth year he was a sayer of smart things that minister to the necessities of the vast multitude who are indebted to their memory for their jests.

The vacation over, Maître Arouet pressed his son to think of a profession. "I desire none," said the youth, "except that of literature." The father replied, "Literature is the profession of a man who wishes to be useless to society, a burden to his relations, and to die of hunger." [1] The rest of the family sided with the father in combating the young man's choice; and, at that moment, the very servants in his father's kitchen may have joined in dissuading him. "The affair of the couplets" had broken out in Paris, covering literature itself with opprobrium, and overwhelming with shame and ruin one of its most illustrious living ornaments, the poet J. B. Rousseau. From being the favorite of princes, ladies, and bishops, he had suddenly come to naught, and had fled from Paris, never to return to it in honor. Strange to say, there was involved in his peril and disgrace a cobbler's apprentice, the son of Maître Arouet's charwoman. It was a childish business; but, under a "paternal government," an affair too trivial for mention may become terrible and desolating.

Some scandalous, vituperative couplets had been mysteriously dropped in a noted café much frequented by the literary men whom the couplets assailed. Rousseau, suspected of having written them, accused Joseph Saurin, a teacher of mathematics in the neighborhood, and made out so strong a case against him that he was arrested and held for trial. But Saurin was an able and resolute man, with powerful friends, and he defended himself with so much skill and effect as to secure his own release and Rousseau's arraignment. One of Saurin's witnesses was the boy just mentioned, who had been employed to convey some of the couplets to the coffee-house, — a task in which he had been assisted by a little shoe-black. The terror of the mother, on hearing of her son's arrest, was extreme, and she deafened all the quarter with her outcries, saying that her son would be hanged. François Arouet, as it chanced, was at home; the outbreak having occurred in the vacation following his scene with the poet. "Take comfort, my good woman," said he; "there is no hanging to be afraid of. Rousseau, a shoemaker's son, suborns a cobbler, who, you say, is the

[1] Duvernet, chapter iii.

accomplice of a shoe-black. All that does n't go above the ankle."

The case looked so black for Rousseau that he did not appear at his trial, and was consequently condemned as "contumacious," and sentenced to banishment and the confiscation of his goods. He was a ruined man.

On his death-bed he solemnly declared his innocence; and he probably was innocent of writing the couplets. Voltaire knew the truth, and drops intimations of it here and there in his writings. A knot of witty fellows, Saurin being one of them, who were in the habit of meeting for convivial purposes, amused themselves by writing personal couplets, which Rousseau *may* have been mischievous enough to bring to the notice of the subjects of them. This trivial affair, besides blasting the career of an exquisite poet, one of the glories of French literature, rent Paris into two impassioned factions, brought reproach upon literary pursuits, and remains to this day a discredit to all who were concerned in it.[1]

Maître Arouet, the prudent father, and Armand Arouet, "my Jansenist of a brother," could both find argument in it against a literary career. Armand was then twenty-seven years of age, and more a Jansenist than ever, carrying an extreme to an extreme. Our youth yielded to their united opposition; he was enrolled among the students of law in Paris, and attended the lectures. He also entered upon a course of lessons in geometry and metaphysics with Saurin, whose conduct in the affair of the couplets had given him a great increase of celebrity. For three years he studied under Saurin. He owns that he heard the geometer recite couplets against La Motte *like* those for which poor Rousseau was exiled.

A French student who now begins the study of the law buys for three francs a copy of the "Code Civil," a volume about as large as a pocket Testament, and as easy to understand as the Ten Commandments. Napoleon may have caught the idea of reducing French law to this simple form from a sentence in one of Voltaire's letters of 1739. "What disgusted me with the profession of advocate," he wrote, "was the profusion of useless things with which they wished to load

[1] See 35 Œuvres de Voltaire, 238, 240; 75 same, 517; 24 same, 185; 63 same, 268; all contemporary memoirs; Factum, by Joseph Saurin.

my brain. To THE POINT is my device." French law, in fact, was very much the same as English law and American law before the era of codifying and simplification. The old legal forms and customs, both French and English, were well adapted to their purpose of making justice expensive and lawyers indispensable. A glance at an old edition of Coke upon Lyttleton will convey a lively idea of the crabbed nature of the pursuit from which this young man instantly recoiled. But he had harder nuts than this to crack; at least, less attractive. "An advocate," he wrote half a century later, "is a man who, not having money enough to buy one of those brilliant offices upon which the universe has its eyes fixed (such as Counselor to the Salt Commissioners), studies for three years the laws of Theodosius and Justinian in order to know the practice of Paris, and who, being at last matriculated, has a right to plead for money, if he has a strong voice." To complete his disgust, the place in which the law school was held was repulsive, "a kind of barn," says Duvernet. "That country," remarks the same chronicler, "seemed to him barbarous and the laws a chaos." He continued to attend the classes, however, and may have even been admitted to practice.

Meanwhile, he was eighteen; he was François Arouet; he was in Paris; and he had an occupation which it was a pleasure to neglect.

Abbé de Châteauneuf did not live to see his pupil's later triumphs at the college. He died in 1709, but not before he had exhibited the young prodigy to certain votaries of verse and pleasure besides the incredible Ninon; among others to the Epicureans of the Temple, so frequently mentioned in the memoirs of that time. The Temple was what remained of the ancient monastery of the Templars, — a great square tower, with a smaller tower at each corner, where, in later times, Louis XVI. and his family were confined. Adjacent was the palace of the Grand Prior of France, Philippe Vendôme, one of the notorious voluptuaries of his generation, the last of the Vendômes, a ducal line descended from Henry IV. and one of his mistresses The entire mass of building in the inclosure was called the Temple, but the ancient towers were then private property, and were let in suites to various tenants, the "Templars" of the age of Louis XIV.

If these people had had to choose a Madonna, a majority of them would have been likely to cast their votes for Ninon de Lenclos, whom they had known in her old age. The Grand Prïor, who, besides enjoying the revenues of a prince, had rich benefices to bestow, lived only for pleasure, and had little notion of pleasure that was not sensual: "carried to bed every night for thirty years dead drunk," reports St. Simon. Years before, he had taken a fancy to the Abbé Chaulieu, poet and refined sensualist, to whom he had given abbey after abbey, until his income amounted to thirty thousand francs a year, for which the abbé rendered no service whatever, seldom going near one of his abbeys, but living always in a sumptuous abode within the Temple. This personage was never dead drunk, for he and most of the Templars valued themselves upon not lessening the sum-total of pleasure by vulgar excess. They wrote verses, gave elegant repasts, said witty things, cultivated the art of pleasing, observed the decorums, and practiced the vices. It is not necessary to know whether Paris exaggerated their immoralities, since there was at the base of their lives one immorality which sufficed to vitiate their whole existence: they wore the garb, shared the revenues, and enjoyed the honors of a church whose creed they despised and whose ordinances they disobeyed. Besides the churchmen, there were certain witty and dissolute noblemen who frequented the society of the Temple: the Marquis la Fare, more Bacchanalian than Epicurean, whose name is joined to that of Abbé de Chaulieu on the title-page of a volume of gay verse, still procurable. This good-natured reprobate died of a gorge of cod-fish the year after François Arouet left school. The Duke de Sully, the Duke de Vendôme, the Prince de Conti, and other persons of rank were glad to escape the formalities and observances of the court, and join the easy livers of the Temple.

Our law student was early welcomed to their circle, and we can see from his verses and letters of those years that he was upon a footing of perfect familiarity with its members. Other great houses and noted salons were opened to him; his schoolmates bore him in mind; and we soon see him, mere youth as he was, living the life and taking the tone of a young man of fashion. He was *le bel esprit à la mode*, caressed by ladies,

and made much of by men, supping with princes, and making impromptu verses in the salon of the Abbé de Chaulieu. The complacent Duvernet, himself an abbé, describes the Templars as a society of Epicurean philosophers, "all of a severe probity," who enjoyed the charms of merry and friendly conversation at a time when Paris was rent into theologic factions. Every one of them, he remarks, composed verses, which made the student say, one day, at the house of the Prince de Conti, as they were taking their places at table, "We are here all princes or all poets."

He abandoned himself to this gay and splendid life, drinking deep draughts of a kind of pleasure that is peculiarly captivating to a young man of his temperament and circumstances. No doubt he was a wild lad, for a time; for at eighteen it is not possible to be a very philosophic Epicurean. There were no latch-keys in those primitive times, and Maître Arouet was not a father who would often sit up late for a prodigal, nor willingly go to bed leaving him to be let in at an hour unknown. One night, his patience being exhausted, he had the keys brought to him, locked up the house, and went to bed, taking the keys with him. The youth came home late (that is, at ten o'clock) from a verse-making carouse with his fine friends, and found the front door inexorably shut. He had to seek a lodging, and found refuge at last in a porter's chair in the court of the Palace of Justice, where he fell into that deep sleep which late carousers know. In the morning, two lawyers, going by to early court, found him still fast asleep, recognized him, and had him carried, chair and all, into a café near by, in the midst of which he woke, to find himself the centre of a group, merry at his expense.[1] And of course he found his allowance of money insufficient, — the latch-key controversy and the money question bearing to one another a certain relation. Writing of this period long after, he said: —

"I remember that, being one day under the necessity of borrowing money of a pawnbroker, I found two crucifixes upon his table. I asked him if he had taken them in pledge. He said, No; he never made a bargain except in presence of a crucifix. I told him that, in that case, one was enough, and I advised him to place it between the two thieves. He called me impious, and declared he would lend me no

[1] Vie Privée de Voltaire et Madame du Châtelet, par Madame Grafigny, page 17.

money. I took leave; but he ran after me, and said, making the sign of the cross, that if I could assure him that I had no ill intentions in speaking to him in that way he might be able, with a good conscience, to accommodate me. I told him that I had only very good intentions. Then he concluded to lend me some money on my pledges, at ten per cent., deducting the interest in advance and at the end of six months he disappeared with my pledges, which were worth four or five times the sum he had lent me. The countenance of this fine fellow, his tone, all his ways, were so comic that I have often made my companions laugh by imitating them."[1]

There is an anecdote, also, of a great lady giving him a hundred louis for correcting her verses, and of the use he made of the money, which may have some basis of truth. Going along the street, overjoyed to find himself the possessor of so large a sum, he came to where an auctioneer was selling a carriage, a pair of horses, and the liveries of a coachman and footman. He bid a hundred louis for the lot, and it was knocked down to him. All day he drove about Paris, giving his friends rides, supped gayly in the city, and continued to ride till late in the evening, when, not knowing what else to do with them, he crowded the horses into his father's stable, already full. The thundering noise of this operation woke the old man, who, on learning its cause, turned young scapegrace out-of-doors, and, the next day, had the carriage and horses sold for half price.

Voltaire has idealized all this in his comedy of "Le Dépositaire," in which two brothers figure, resembling in some degree himself and his brother Armand: one a bigot and devotee; the other a young fellow of society, agreeable and fond of pleasure. Ninon is the leading female character, a woman of the world and an "estimable man," in contrast with whom there is a cheating Tartuffe of a church-warden. The elder brother is described as "a serious fool," who had formed the "extravagant design of being a perfect man;" sad and dismal, regardless of appearances, bent over an old Greek book, his face hidden in a greasy cap, ink on his fingers, and his body half buried in a heap of papers. The younger, on the contrary, lives to please and be pleased; a little wild, perhaps, but entirely amiable and honorable, — a universal favorite. "I love people of

[1] 11 Œuvres de Voltaire, 394.

worth," says Ninon, "but bigots I hate; and I fear rogues who govern fools." There are things in this comedy which our law student may often have said to his severe and credulous brother: "You take a great deal of trouble to be unhappy. What would you say to a fool who should tear and tread down the flowers of his garden, lest he should enjoy their delightful fragrance? Oh, the pleasant glory to spoil your wine for fear of drinking too much!"

But the elder is not silent. "Go!" he cries. "Plunge neck-deep into the brilliant filth of that frenzied world, whose glitter enchants you. Turn into amusing ridicule virtuous men. Swim in pleasures, — in those shameful pleasures whose sweetness produces so much bitterness." And then he soliloquizes: "What a sweet and noble pleasure to hate pleasure; to be able to say to one's self, 'I am without desires, master of myself, just, serene, wise, my soul a rock in the midst of the storm!" He speaks also of his "fool of a brother," who, without taking the least trouble, delights all the world; a plain proof that the world is no better than he, and only fit to be renounced.

All this, doubtless, François and Armand repeated many times, while their irascible father regarded them as equally perverse and out of the way. "I have a pair of fools for sons," said he, — "one in verse, and the other in prose." His son François seldom said a neater thing.

The father was, indeed, distressed and alarmed to see his younger son neglecting his law studies, associating with princes and philosophers, and playing pranks highly unbecoming a youth who had his own way to make in the world. He bore it with what little patience he had for a year and a half, and then felt that the time was come to get the young man out of seductive Paris, beyond the reach of his friends of the Temple. He sent him first to the ancient Norman city of Caen, a hundred and forty miles from Paris, within sight of the English Channel, — that quaint and venerable Caen, the residence and tomb of William the Conqueror. But Caen was a polite city of several thousand inhabitants, the seat of a university, with an ancient and large library, and a considerable circle of people interested in literature and learning. All doors at Caen opened to receive this *bel esprit à la mode de Paris*. Madame d'Os-

seville, whose poems still rest in manuscript in the Caen Library, gave him welcome, dazzled by the brilliancy of his conversation and the flash of his impromptus; until, learning that he wrote libertine verses also, she invited him no more. But there was a Father Couvrigny, of the Jesuit college there, who, having no scruples of the kind, associated with him constantly, and foretold for him a splendid future. And still his father urged him to return and settle to a career, offering to buy for him, in due time, the high post of counselor to the parliament of Paris. "Tell my father," said he to the bearer of this offer, "that I do not desire any place which can be bought. I shall know how to make one for myself that will cost nothing." And, indeed, in the midst of his reckless gayety, he did not lose sight of his object. He exerted his better powers; he wrote serious verse; he was already revolving subjects and schemes which he was to treat erelong with an effect that justified his confident reply to his father's generous offer.

Caen did nothing to wean him from his choice, and he returned to Paris, after an absence of some months, to resume his former way of life.

CHAPTER VIII.

HEAD OVER EARS IN LOVE.

After more years of disastrous and humiliating war than François-Marie Arouet could remember, France, in the spring of 1713, enjoyed peace again. The Treaty of Utrecht between England, Holland, and France, signed in April, was to France like air to a man suffocating, like sudden deliverance to a hopeless prisoner. There is no news so exhilarating as the news of peace after a long war. On the 10th of June the King of France, to the profound joy of his subjects, appointed an ambassador to reside at the capital of the Netherlands, and the person chosen was the Marquis de Châteauneuf, brother to the late abbé, the boy poet's guide, philosopher, and friend. The old diplomatist was good enough to appoint the youth one of his pages, or, as we should term it, *attachés* unpaid; and so, amid the general joy of that summer, our student of law had the additional pleasure of a journey to the Hague in the train of an ambassador. Virtue itself is not always so agreeably rewarded.

The marquis and his retinue reached the Hague September 28, 1713, though his formal reception occurred later. "It is a pleasant jest," wrote the page, "to make a solemn entry into a city where you have been living for several weeks."

This appointment in the diplomatic line was not, perhaps, the mere expedient of an exasperated father to get a troublesome son out of Paris. Voltaire all his life had a certain hankering to be employed in diplomacy. Pierre de Ronsard, French poet of the sixteenth century, had begun his truly fine career as page to an ambassador, a post from which he advanced to the most confidential trusts a subject could fulfill. Maître Arouet might well have accepted this proceeding as a happy compromise with his unmanageable son, and might have indulged a rational expectation of his advancement.

With a quarter of his talents and ten times his prudence, he might have come to be ambassador to a small kingdom at sixty-five.

His diplomatic career was short, and very much in the style of an ambassador's page in an Italian comedy. Among the great number of French people then living in Holland, as in all Protestant countries and colonies, refugees from the savage intolerance of Louis XIV.'s priests, there was a Madame Dunoyer, Protestant by birth, the wife of a French Catholic gentleman of repute, from whom she was separated. Exiled by the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, she had lived in Switzerland, in London, in Holland, the precarious, demoralizing life of a woman without any of the usual means of support. She had written various kinds of trash, and in 1704 published at Cologne a work in seven volumes, entitled "Letters Historical and Gallant," full of the scandal and gossip by which the dullest and meanest of our kind can make a certain sensation in the world. The letters were fictitious, supposed to be the correspondence between a woman of fashion in Paris and a lady living in the country. These volumes had made Madame Dunoyer an object of interest to a portion of the public, and an object of dread to another portion. She was feared, courted, and despised, as the editor of a scurrilous journal is sometimes feared, courted, and despised; for what she had done once she could do again.

A moth does not fly to a candle by a more inevitable impulse than such a page as Arouet at nineteen gets within range of such a woman, living in such a place. She had two daughters: the elder married and living in Paris; the younger, Olimpe, not pretty, as he used to say sixty years after, but extremely amiable and winning. He fell in love with her, — he nineteen and without a profession, she twenty-one and without a sou. It was an honest and virtuous love on his part, creditable to him as a human being, nor quite as rash and reckless as it seemed. It was the best love he ever experienced, and, in other circumstances, might have had its natural issue, to the lasting good of both. His scheme was to get her to return to France, where her father still lived, where she had influential connections, and where no one was more sure of a welcome than a stray lamb returning to the fold of

Louis XIV.'s church. "The king wishes every one in France to be of *his* religion," truly said a blunt soldier to the Protestants whom he was sent to convert, at the head of a body of cavalry. The mother, according to this sage lover, was a dragon, who treated her daughter harshly, and did not deserve to possess such an adorable creature. In other words, Madame Dunoyer, who had made a promising match for one daughter, was intent on getting for "Pimpette" a husband who would be both able and willing to establish comfortably a mother-in-law. A page of nineteen, a notary's son, without fortune, bore no resemblance whatever to that son-in-law of her dreams who was to end her long and bitter struggle with adverse fortune.

All went prosperously with his love for a few weeks, the young lady returning his affection, and the mother not remarking it. October and November passed, and still they were happy. But one dreadful evening, about the first of December, when the lover returned late to the embassy, the ambassador confronted him, told him all was discovered, and he must start for home the next day. The Marquis de Châteauneuf, with the timidity natural to a public man at the critical hour of a ticklish mission, dared not make an enemy of this woman of the audacious pen, and feared she might affront his page in some way which he could not avoid officially noticing. The lover begged for mercy, but all he could get was a single day's grace, with the condition annexed of not leaving the embassy until the moment of his final departure. He must go in forty-eight hours, and not see his Pimpette again.

His valet was a cunning Norman named Lefévre, a true valet of comedy, whom he could implicitly trust, and by him he sent a long letter to Pimpette, relating the disaster, and unfolding his plans for their speedy reunion. Already she had agreed to rejoin her father, and this explosion, as he urged, should only hasten her flight from a mother unworthy of her.

"Send me three letters," he wrote, "one for your father, one for your uncle, and one for your sister; that is absolutely necessary; but I shall only deliver them when circumstances favor, especially the one for your sister. Let the shoemaker be the bearer of those letters; promise him a reward; and let him come with a last in his hand, as if to mend my shoes. Add to those letters a

note for me; let me have that comfort on setting out; and, above all, in the name of the love I bear you, my dear, send me your portrait; use all your efforts to get it from your mother; it had better be in my hands than in hers, for it is already in my heart. The servant I send you is wholly devoted to me, and if you wish to pass him off to your mother as a snuff-box maker, he is a Norman and will play the part well. . . . I shall do all that is possible to see you to-morrow before leaving Holland; but, as I cannot assure you of it, I bid you good-by, my dear heart, for the last time, and I do it swearing to you all the tender love which you merit. Yes, my dear Pimpette, I shall love you always. Lovers the least faithful say the same; but their love is not founded, as mine is, upon perfect esteem. I love your goodness as much as I love your person, and I only ask of Heaven the privilege of imbibing from you the noble sentiments you possess. . . . Adieu, once more, my dear mistress; think a little of your unhappy lover, but not so as to dash your spirits. Keep your health if you wish to preserve mine. Above all, have a great deal of discretion; burn my letter and all that you get from me; it were better to be less generous to me, and take better care of yourself. Let us take comfort from the hope of seeing one another very soon, and let us love one another as long as we live. Perhaps I shall even come back here in quest of you, and, if so, I shall be the happiest of men. But, after all, provided you get to Paris, I shall be only too well satisfied; for, wishing only your welfare, I would willingly secure it at the expense of my own, and should feel myself richly recompensed in cherishing the sweet assurance that I had contributed to restore you to happiness."

So far, so well. This was the letter of an honest lover, and the scheme seemed feasible. But when he summoned Lefévre to convey the epistle to the young lady, the valet told him he had received orders to deliver to the ambassador any letters his master might charge him with. Away with prudence! He *would* see his mistress, despite the vigilance of his chief, one of the most experienced diplomatists in Europe. Favored by an unavoidable delay in setting out, he engaged in a series of manœuvres, precisely such as we laugh at at the theatre, when an imaginary Figaro exerts his talents to help or baffle a fictitious Count. He wrote a letter to Pimpette, which he meant the marquis to read, and told his valet to deliver it to him, as ordered. He corresponded

with her continually, and had several interviews with her. One night, at the rising of the moon, he left the embassy in disguise, placed a carriage near the adored one's abode, made the usual comedy signal under her window, received her to his arms, and away they rode, five miles into the country to the sea-side village of Scheveningen; and there, with the ink and paper which he had provided, she wrote the three letters that he desired for use in Paris. This certainly was the entertainment to which he invited her, and which appears to have been carried out.

She was as mad as he; or at least she fooled him to the top of his bent. The shoemaker's family, who lived near her abode, were in their interests; the lovers sometimes met at their house, and when he visited Pimpette in the evening, it it was the wife of the shoemaker who mounted guard and signalized the approach of an enemy. One evening, it appears, the woman was mistaken, and gave a false alarm, which caused the page to take flight with needless precipitation. The woman thought she saw approaching the secretary of legation, but it was no such matter. The only letter of the young lady which has been preserved is one which explains this error of judgment on the part of the sentinel, and urges him to come again. This eager and ill-spelt letter he appears to have carried about his person for years after, and it bears a formal attestation, still legible, that it was found upon him when he arrived at the Bastille, in 1717.

"Do all you can," she concluded, "that I may see you this evening. You will only have to go down into the shoemaker's kitchen, and I answer for it that you have nothing to fear, for my mother believes you half-way to Paris. So, if you please, I shall have the pleasure of seeing you this evening. And if that cannot be, let me attend the mass at the embassy; I will ask M. de la Bruyère [secretary of legation] to show me the chapel. To women curiosity is permitted. And then, without any disguise, I shall ask him if they have received any news from you yet, and when you started. Do not refuse me this favor, my dear Arouet; I ask it of you in the name of the tenderest of all things,— the love I bear you. Adieu, my amiable child. I adore you, and I swear that my love will last as long as my life." [1]

[1] Jeunesse de Voltaire, page 67.

This note was signed "Dunoyer," and had a postscript, begging him, if they failed to meet that evening, to send her some dear news of himself.

An experienced ambassador had an eye upon this uncontrollable page of his, and was not long ignorant of any of his escapades. He gave the young man formal orders, in the king's name, not to leave the embassy; which only caused the love-stricken youth to declare to Pimpette that he would visit her, though it should bring his head to the block. And he did see her again and again. Closely watched by day, he would drop from a window at midnight, and go to her house, near which she would join him, if she could manage to steal unperceived from her mother's bed. The ambassador came to the point with him at last, and gave him his choice,— either to leave Holland instantly, or wait a week for the next official opportunity, and, in the mean time, engage not to go out of the hotel.

The distracted lover chose to remain a prisoner. Then he dispatched Lefévre with his maddest note to Pimpette, explaining the new situation, and begging her to come to him, since he could not go to her. "Send Lisbette about three," he wrote; "I will give her a parcel for you containing a suit of man's clothes. You can put them on in her room; and if you have regard enough for a poor prisoner who adores you, you will take the trouble to come to the embassy about dusk. To what a cruel extremity are we reduced, my dear! Is it your part to come to me? But it is our only way of seeing one another. You love me, and so I hope to see you this day in my rooms."

It was his own clothes that he sent; but, fearing they might be recognized, he hired a cloak and doublet, with which she was to conceal them. Pimpette actually assumed the disguise and visited him, to his great content, but not without being suspected. The ambassador summoned Lefévre to his presence, and questioned him closely; but the cunning Norman contrived, as he thought, to throw dust in the eyes of the chief, and even found out that a trap was to be set to catch Pimpette if she should repeat the visit. The page at once sent his valet to bring back his clothes, and that night he got out of his window once more, and met her at their usual rendezvous.

The old diplomatist discovered this also, and wrote in a rage to Maître Arouet, giving him such an account of his son's conduct as an angry ambassador might, who saw the success of his mission hazarded by a comedy of love between a rash boy of nineteen and an experienced virgin of twenty-one.

December 18th, the lover left the Hague, and began his journey to Paris, sending her long letters to the last day of his stay, and continuing to write from the cabin of the yacht that bore him away from the enchanted shore. A very long and tumultuous epistle, indeed, was the one which he sent back to her from the frontier, swearing eternal constancy and unfolding his plan for her deliverance. Her mother, as it appears, had assailed the incomparable Pimpette with something more terrible than words, and he entreats her to burn his letters, lest her mother should find them and again "maltreat" her. "Do not expose yourself to the fury of your mother: you know what she is capable of — alas! you have experienced it but too well. Dissemble with her; it is your only chance. Tell her (which I hope you never will do) that you have forgotten me; tell her that you hate me; and then love me all the more for it."

He told her what he meant to do as soon as he should reach Paris. Already he had taken measures; he had written a letter to the friend and patron of his college days, Father Tournemine, Jesuit, and asked his aid in bringing back a stray lamb to the fold. "The first thing I shall do, on my arrival at Paris, will be to enlist Father Tournemine on your behalf. Next, I shall deliver your letters. I shall be obliged to explain to my father the cause of my return, and I flatter myself that he will not be entirely displeased with me, provided they have not prejudiced him against us beforehand. But even if I should have to face his anger, I shall always consider myself too happy, when I think that you are the most lovely being in the world, and that you love me. In my short life I have passed no moments so sweet as those in which you have sworn to me that you returned my tender love."

He was a week in performing the journey from the Hague to Paris, — from eight A. M. on Monday, December 18th, to the evening of Sunday, the 24th; the distance being about

three hundred miles. Only couriers, diplomatists, and lovers averaged forty miles a day in 1713. It was Christmas Eve when he arrived, and he went promply to Father Tournemine at his old quarters in the Collège Louis-le-Grand. Joyful tidings greeted him. Tournemine had received, approved, and answered his letter; he had communicated with the Bishop of Evreux, cousin of Pimpette; he was zealous in the cause of the stray lamb. The lover, finding the priest so apt, intrusted him with the three letters that Pimpette had written to her relations in Paris; and he agreed to use all his influence to induce her father to receive her. This was, indeed, a most hopeful beginning.

But he had a father according to the flesh, who might not find the return of stray lambs of twenty-one so interesting. The young diplomatist deemed it best to reconnoitre the ground a little before coming within range of an irascible parent; and he soon discovered that he had better not think of joining the family at their Christmas dinner that year. The ambassador had not only written to his father a "bloody letter," giving a full account of his proceedings in Holland, but had sent also the infuriate letters of Madame Dunoyer to himself, in which those proceedings were related with an enraged mother's emphasis and fluency.

The notary's patience gave way; he had borne from this young man all that he could. He formally disinherited him. He went to the minister and procured a *lettre de cachet*, with which to get him arrested and confined; and when the friends of the family, at the young man's request, remonstrated with him, all that they could obtain was a change of sentence from imprisonment to exile beyond the seas, in the French West Indies. François might well write to his adored one, "I dare not show myself."

His consolation was to write long letters, telling her, over and over again, that his heart was wholly and unalterably hers, and that nothing was of any consequence to him so long as she loved him. Fathers might do their worst; he was unshaken; but if *she* held back, if *she* determined to remain in Holland, if *she* abandoned him, he assured her that the moment he heard the news he would kill himself. "Never love equaled mine," he wrote; "for never was there a person bet-

ter worthy of love than you. . . . Sorrow, fear, love, agitate me violently; but I always return to bear myself the secret testimony that I have done nothing unbecoming an honest man; and that enables me to support my miseries. . . . My dear Pimpette, my lovely mistress, my dear heart, write to me very soon; nay, at once. As soon as I receive your letter I shall know my fate. What will become of me I know not. I am in frightful uncertainty about everything; I only know that I love you. Ah, when shall I embrace you, my dear heart?"

The sage maiden, versed in love, who had drawn on this susceptible page to such a point, was naturally the first to recover her self-possession. She still wrote kindly to him, but gave him good advice, telling him he must make it up with his father at any sacrifice, even if he had to take seriously to the study of the law. The young man obeyed her, and wrote to his father from his hiding-place the most submissive letters every day, in one of which he said, "I consent, O father, to go to America, and even to live there on bread and water, if only, before I go, you will let me embrace your knees." Fathers generally relent in such cases; but Maître Arouet exacted a hard condition, that must have seemed most reasonable and generous to all except this unfledged Voltaire: he must settle to his work of preparing to practice law, and, to that end, reside with a solicitor, attend his office regularly, and apply himself to the business of drawing and copying documents. He did not shrink from giving his Pimpette even this proof of his affection. January 20, 1714, he had the melancholy pleasure of informing her that he had obeyed her command, and had already been a week at work in the office of a solicitor, "learning the trade of pettifogger, to which my father destines me, and hoping in that way to regain his good-will."

Meanwhile, he pushed on his scheme for the recovery of the stray lamb, and with such effect that Father Tellier, the king's confessor, was interested in it, and urged the Marquis de Châteauneuf to lend his aid. But that accomplished diplomatist knew why and for whom the lamb was wanted in France. The lover had forborne to mention to Father Tournemine that he had ever so much as seen Mademoiselle Olimpe Dunoyer, and probably the ambassador supplied this omission.

The young lady wrote with less frequency, said less and less about love, and lent a willing ear to the addresses of others. A year or two later her mother, after desperate exertions, saw the fascinating Olimpe a countess, — Madame la Comtesse de Winterfield. The young lover consoled himself as best he could, and, years after, when he had become a celebrated person, he had the pleasure of seeing fourteen of his letters to Pimpette printed as an appendix to a new edition of her mother's "Lettres Historiques et Gallantes." But to the end of his life he preserved a tender recollection of the woman he had passionately loved at this spring-time of his life, and found opportunities of testifying his good-will toward her.

CHAPTER IX.

SOLICITOR'S CLERK.

At present, then, the bird is caged. Love has done for him what authority had failed to do, and we see him, in January, 1714, junior clerk in the office of Maître Alain, a Paris solicitor in extensive practice, who had at least two clerks besides this new acquisition. He had to board in the house of the solicitor, over which Madame Alain presided, a lady who scarcely knew there was such a thing in the world as poetry. One of his fellow-clerks was Thieriot, a gay lad like himself, fond of verses, of the drama, of pleasure generally, learned in actors and actresses. These two young men were illustrations of the Goethean maxim, not then promulgated: In faults men are much alike; in good qualities they differ. This Thieriot, his intimate friend for sixty years, was an Arouet in everything but genius and constancy; an Arouet in everything except that energy of soul which enables some men to rise superior to an imperfect education and misleading companions, and rescue a portion of themselves and a part of their lives for something nobler than pleasure. Thieriot became excessively fond of his new comrade, and trumpeted him with such ardor and frequency that he was long known in Paris, King Frederic tells us,[1] as Voltaire's hawker. Another clerk of Maître Alain was one Bainast, who seems also to have been a companionable person, with a taste for literature.

It needs but a slight acquaintance with the manners of the time to know that our young poet's life with the solicitor was a form of penal servitude, including hard work, unsavory fare, homely lodgings, assiduous deference to Maître and Madame Alain, with but occasional surreptitious glimpses of that brilliant world of which, till lately, he had been a shining atom.

[1] Correspondence of Frederic II., of Prussia, Letter to D'Alembert, October 27, 1772.

He could have borne it all, if Olimpe had been faithful to him, for he was constancy's own self; he could not but be constant. He was not long in discovering that his adorable Pimpette was bestowing smiles upon another, and he found his situation in the solicitor's office intolerable. His father had cut down his allowance of money, and he became a frequent borrower, putting his name to bills which he found difficult to meet. For some years of this part of his life he was in straits for money, and thus acquired a sense of its value which poets do not always possess. A note promising to pay five hundred francs upon his coming of age was given by him soon after he heard of the Ninon legacy, and the document graces at the present moment a collection of autographs in Orleans. Traces of similar transactions of his have been discovered in old court records, and some of them appear to have given him trouble many years after their date.[1] It is probable that the chief advantage which he derived from the Ninon legacy was its providing a basis, small but solid, for his credit with money lenders.

To complete his discontent, he suffered humiliation this year even in his character of poet. The Academy had offered, a year or two before, a prize of a group in bronze for the best poem upon the king's magnificent generosity in fulfilling a vow of his father, Louis XIII., by completing a new choir in the Cathedral of Notre Dame. Arouet had not only sent in a poem to compete, but had read it to friends, and forwarded a copy to the exiled Rousseau, who returned generous praise to the young poet. August 25, 1714, the award of the Academy was published, and it was not François-Marie Arouet who received the bronze. By a favoritism so obvious that every person of taste in Paris remarked it, the prize was given to a garrulous old Abbé du Jarri, author of two volumes of "Panegyrics of the Saints," and another upon the "Eloquence of the Pulpit, or the Best Way of preaching the Word of God," — works which I find advertised in booksellers' catalogues of that period. Du Jarri was so unlucky as to declare in his poem that the glory of the king was known throughout the whole earth, at the *burning poles* as well as at the frozen, which gave the wits of the Temple a fair opportunity of jesting at

[1] Voltaire, Sa Vie et ses Œuvres, par Abbé Maynard, vol. i. p. 103.

his expense. It was the poet La Motte who had decided the award, — the La Motte who had taken the lead of the literary faction that objected to the ascendency of the ancients over the moderns, and were disposed to underrate Homer, Virgil, and Horace. Du Jarri, it appears, belonged to this faction, a circumstance which was supposed to have influenced the decision. When the unfortunate allusion to the burning poles was pointed out to La Motte, he said that no one knew for certain whether there was or was not a burning pole, and the question was, in any case, an affair of the Academy of Sciences, not of the French Academy. The wits of the city laughed at the successful poet, and the disappointed competitor relieved his mind by epigrams and satirical verses, in which the aged abbé, his poem, the bronze group, the Academy, and La Motte were all ridiculed. But he could not rail the seal of the Academy off the award. He remained unknown to the great public, while Du Jarri, elated and ridiculous, hastened to press with a volume of "Poems, Christian, Heroic, and Moral."

Arouet and some of his roystering friends had a ludicrous interview with the abbé, perhaps in one of the booksellers' shops of Paris, which were numerous and important even then.[1] Du Jarri, not aware that one of the young men was his competitor, showed them some of the proofs of his new volume, the first page of which bore the device, "To Immortality." Not supposing that they recognized him as the author, he proceeded to explain these words in a style that seemed highly absurd to the young men: —

Du Jarri. — "This is the device of the French Academy. The piece, however, is not of the Academy, though the Academy has adopted it; and if those gentlemen had actually composed the poem they would not have treated the subject otherwise. You must know that every other year the Academy offers a prize for poetry, and in that way every other year immortalizes somebody. You see in my hands the work which has won the prize this year. Oh, how fortunate is the author of this poem! For forty years he has been composing without

[1] In the eighteenth century, publishing and printing formed one of the most important industries of Paris. A list published in 1701 gives the names of one hundred and seventy-eight master booksellers in business, thirty-five out of business, twenty-seven widows still keeping shop, thirty-six master printers, and nineteen widows carrying on printing-offices." (5 Journal De Barbier, 4.)

becoming known to the public; and now, for a little poem, we see him a sharer in all the reputation of the Academy."

Arouet. — "But does it never happen that an author who is declared immortal by the Forty is consigned to the rank of the Cotins by the public, the judge in the last resort?"

Du Jarri. — "That cannot be; for the Academy was instituted for the purpose of fixing the taste of France, and there is no appeal from its decisions."

A Comrade of Arouet. — "I have some good proofs that an assembly of forty persons is not infallible. Among others, there is the Cid and Furetière's Dictionary, which sustained themselves against the Academy; and, since it has censured good books, it might happen to approve some very bad ones."

Du Jarri (reading in a loud voice by way of triumphant answer to this remark). — "Christian prize poem, by Monsieur the Abbé du Jarri."

Arouet. — "Before you begin we ought to know who Monsieur the Abbé du Jarri is; also the subject of his poem and the nature of the prize."

Du Jarri. — "Formerly, Monsieur the Abbé Jarri published several funeral orations and some sermons. At present he is getting through the press a volume of his poems, and there is reason to believe he is as good a poet as great orator. The subject of his poem is the praise of the king upon the occasion of the new choir of Notre Dame, erected by Louis XIV., and promised by Louis XIII. The prize is a beautiful group in bronze, in which there is a wonderful blending of the fabulous and the sacred; Renown appearing in it near Religion, and Piety supported by a Genius. For the rest, the rivals of Monsieur the Abbé du Jarri were young people, nineteen or twenty years old, while Monsieur the Abbé is sixty-five, and it is very just that honor should be paid to his age."

Having delivered this modest explanation to the mischievous youngsters before him, the abbé coughed, and read with all an author's fond, discriminating emphasis his Christian poem in honor of the king. Such, at least, is the report of the scene given by the young rival of nineteen or twenty, in a letter to a friend.[1]

This was harmless fun; but among the verses which the solicitor's clerk wrote on this occasion was a short and extremely disagreeable satire called "Mud" (*Le Bourbier*), — a word which describes as well as names the piece. It was aimed at

[1] 67 Œuvres de Voltaire, 39.

La Motte, whose fables are still reckoned among the excellent things produced in that age, and it was in every sense and to the uttermost degree unbecoming and improper, as the author of it afterwards admitted. But the writing of this piece led to his deliverance from the thraldom of the solicitor's office, and from the meagre housekeeping of Madame Alain. His father, who had seen Rousseau ruined and banished for couplets not worse than the "Mud" hurled by his son at La Motte, was alarmed anew on his account, berated him soundly, and threatened to exclude him from his house unless he changed his way of life and attended more punctually to the business of the office.

No doubt he gave his father abundant cause of uneasiness. Forty years after, in writing to a man of science, he had occasion to discuss the prevalent opinion of the poisonous nature of powdered diamond, and he was able to draw an illustration of his point from this wild period of his youth. Powdered glass, he then learned, could be swallowed with impunity; and if glass, why not diamond? He told his learned friend that he remembered seeing young men, in their revels, after emptying their glasses in honor of some eminent toast of the day, chew those wine-glasses to pieces and swallow them. "I had the misfortune," he adds, "to sup sometimes, in my youth, with gentlemen of that kind. They broke their glasses with their teeth, and neither the wine nor the glass did them any harm.[1]

He could not have done much of such revelry as this; his constitution did not admit of it, and we know that he had always serious compositions in course of execution, upon which he founded confident hopes of a career which should justify his aversion to the profession of his father's choice.

Meanwhile, his father remained unconvinced, and strongly disapproved of his son's conduct. He was right and he was wrong, as parents are apt to be whose offspring prove to be soaring falcons instead of respectable chickens. This irascible father stood indignant and alarmed to see his fledgeling resolved upon attempting the airy heights, without being yet strong enough upon the wing to keep out of *le bourbier*. The young man, on his part, loathed the work of Maître Alain's office, and believed he had a right to loathe it, as being in itself absurd and not his vocation.

[1] 75 Œuvres de Voltaire, 63.

Among his fine friends of the Temple was a young gentleman named Caumartin, nephew of Louis-Urbain de Caumartin, Marquis de Saint-Ange, a magistrate of honorable and old renown. The marquis was just such a personage as Maître Arouet desired his younger son to become; for he had made his career in the law, and now, after filling high places with honor, had retired to a château and estate which he possessed, nine miles from the royal palace of Fontainebleau. The younger Caumartin, it seems, conveyed to Maître Arouet an invitation for his reprobate son to take up his abode at Saint-Ange, and there pursue legal studies in a larger and more agreeable way than was possible in the office of a Paris solicitor. The reprobate, as Duvernet intimates, made those profuse and emphatic promises which reprobates usually do in such cases, and the notary gave his consent. Behold virtue again rewarded! In the lovely autumn days of 1714 we see the solicitor's clerk turning his back upon involved and tedious copying, and riding out through a beautiful country to an ancient and singularly interesting château, where he was installed the permanent guest of the man in France who was fullest of what he wanted most!

CHAPTER X.

AT THE CHÂTEAU OF SAINT-ANGE.

No memory is so likely to be stored with things curious and interesting as that of an old lawyer and magistrate. M. de Caumartin was one of those old lawyers and magistrates who have a particular curiosity with regard to contemporary events and persons, and a memory from which no detail escapes. The Duke de St. Simon, not a lenient judge, describes him as a man of large person, handsome and well formed, very capable in law and finance, honest, obliging, and polite, though a little given to play the great lord in a harmless way. "He knew everything," continues the diarist, "in history, in genealogy, in court anecdotes; and remembered everything that he had ever heard or read, even to repeating in conversation whole pages." His father also had been a public man, in the confidence of the government of his time; so that the present lord of Saint-Ange knew familiarly the men, the events, the gossip, the scandal, the "inside truth" of the last three reigns, from the stirring days of Henry IV. and the League to these sad closing weeks of Louis XIV. A library, rich in the works of the great age of French literature, was one of the special treasures of the château, and the walls of the edifice were covered with portraits of the men of whom the old counselor most loved to converse and the young poet most loved to hear.

Imagine an American youth of twenty, educated in the literatures of Greece, Rome, and Judea, but knowing scarcely anything of the history of his own country, established as an inmate of one of our few historic houses, and listening day by day to some fluent, enthusiastic grandson of a Lee, an Adams, a Jefferson, a Madison, a Jay, a Schuyler, — one who had seen the heroes of the Revolution and taken part in the administrations of the earlier presidents. Imagine the joy

and pride with which the young man would discover that he, too, had a country, and that there had been heroes, statesmen, orators, and patriots on his native soil as well as in the lands of old. M. de Caumartin loved most to dwell upon Henry IV., that bold Henry of Navarre, whose career had so much in it that all men admire, and so little that Frenchmen cannot easily forgive. How varied, how strange, how fascinating, how long, the tale! What incident, what vicissitude, what men, what interests! Our young poet heard the old man relate it spell-bound, and fancied that here was the great theme for an epic poem, — the Iliad of France! Without knowing, as he says, anything of the nature or laws of an epic, he began tumultuously to write passages of a "Henriade," and thus entered upon a work which occupied him at intervals for the next ten years, and upon which he expended more toil than upon any other of his works.

It was, however, the long reign of Louis XIV. which M. de Caumartin personally knew, and of which he could relate those trivial, interesting details which make the life of conversation and narrative. From him the young guest heard the anecdote of Louis XIV. and the battle of Ramilies, which has been so often repeated. Upon receiving the news of the defeat, the king said, "Has God, then, forgotten all that I have done for him?" This was a rare story for such ears! Many such he heard, and in this agreeable way he began to collect the stores of material for a work which saw the light forty years later, — "The Age of Louis XIV."

If he came to Saint-Ange to study law, he forgot his purpose. With a manuscript tragedy in his trunk which critics had praised; with an epic poem begun; with the history of France, all unwritten, surging in his brain; with short poems in manuscript circulating in Paris drawing-rooms, and escaping now and then into print; with a sympathetic circle of accomplished persons urging him on toward the goal of his ambition; living in an historic château furnished with an ample library, and listening daily to one of the most interesting talkers of his generation, he could not but yield to manifest destiny, and embrace finally the literary career. He lived, as it appears, several months at Saint-Ange, visiting Paris occasionally, and always attentive to those last events of the reign of

Louis XIV., which he was to relate by and by. Paris was only forty miles distant, and could easily be reached in a day.

The king was approaching the close of his seventy-seventh year in the summer of 1715, and there was scarcely an intelligent individual in France who did not long for his death. As the news of his decline reached Saint-Ange, from time to time, what topics of discourse were furnished for the ancient master of the château sitting at table with so receptive a person as François Arouet! No one could better explain than the old financier why the king's treasury was a thousand million francs behindhand, and why the king's paper was selling in Paris at an average discount of seventy per cent. For fourteen years there had been a large annual deficit, which had been met by every kind of device which finance ministers had been able to invent. The lord of Saint-Ange knew them all.

But it was not the empty treasury and the distressed kingdom which then occupied men's minds. It was a theological imbroglio, puerile and frivolous in its nature, but terrible and devastating in its consequences. The Bull Unigenitus had recently been let loose upon France by Le Tellier, the keeper of the old king's conscience; and no wild beast breaking from an Indian jungle ever carried into a defenseless village more alarm. M. de Caumartin could relate the whole history of this childish and tragic controversy; and we can easily imagine how such a tale would strike the mind of his young guest. Maître Arouet was the father of François Marie, but the Bull Unigenitus had much to do with engendering Voltaire. I think I see this inquisitive, laughing youth, trained to mockery, but most capable of compassion, listening to the old counselor's story of the Bull: how, as long ago as 1552, the learned Dr. Baius "took it into his head" to sustain a number of propositions touching predestination, much to the prejudice of the doctrine of free-will; how some monks of the Cordelian order, hostile to Baius, selected "seventy-six of these propositions," denounced them to the Pope as heretical, and obtained a Bull condemning them; how the Bull contained a doubtful passage, the meaning of which depended upon the position of a comma, and the friends of Baius sent to Rome to know where the comma was to be placed; how Rome, busy with other matters, sent as an answer a copy of the Bull in which

the doubtful sentence had no comma at all; how a learned priest assured Dr. Baius that a papal Bull must be believed and obeyed, even though it contained errors; and how Dr. Baius then peacefully retracted, — which was a much better plan, remarks Voltaire, than reducing a hundred cities to ashes in the cause.

Thus ended the first chapter of the history of the Bull. The second included the Jansenist and Molinist controversy, one result of which our young mocker had witnessed in his own home, in the unpleasing, irrational demeanor of his brother Armand. Molina was a Spanish Jesuit, who sustained the old doctrine of free-will with a new subtlety all his own. Man's will is free, said Molina, but God foresees how he will exercise his will, and arranges all events in accordance therewith. Jansenius was a French bishop, who wrote a huge book, in which the doctrine of predestination was carried to the extreme of asserting that God commands some things which are impossible, and that Christ did not die for all men. The Jesuits obtained a Bull in 1641 condemning the five leading propositions of Jansenius. But the Jansenists denied that those five propositions were to be found in the Latin folio of their author, and thus the controversy was renewed and embittered, until another Bull in explanation gave a momentary peace to the church.

All this seems too silly to be recounted. But consider the *prize* which ambitious men were playing for, who used this monks' quarrel as a pretext. That prize was the king's ear, the control of the benefices, the supreme authority of the nation! This it was which converted a theological controversy into an engine of oppression, which filled prisons, ruined families, exiled virtuous men, and rendered hypocrisy one of the necessaries of life. It is also a noteworthy circumstance, well known to all the English-speaking world, that the Jansenist theory of the universe, monstrous as it seems to men of the world, had formerly an attraction for educated persons, who placed religion first, and everything else second. Theology, indeed, never came so near the uglier truth of man's life and duty as in the Jansenist creed, and no further advance toward truth was possible, except by a change of method. Very much that was worthiest, highest, strongest, noblest, in France was

Jansenist, from valiant, self-denying Arnauld and gifted Pascal to the frugal, industrious, and virtuous business men of French cities and towns, the main-stay of the kingdom, who have kept it solvent and strong in spite of so many wasteful kings and conquerors. French catalogues contain the titles of seven hundred and sixty works relating to this affair of Jansenism and Molinism, which plagued France for two centuries.

The quarrel, in the life-time of young Arouet, had dwindled to the miserable question whether the five propositions were or were not contained in the work of Jansenius. The Jesuits presented a formula to all the "suspect:" "I condemn from my heart and with my mouth the doctrine of the five propositions contained in the book of Cornelius Jansenius, which doctrine is not that of St. Augustine, whom Jansenius has ill explained." This sufficed to destroy the Port Royalists, since those young ladies had never read the Latin folio of Jansenius, nor any other Latin, and could not conscientiously declare that the five propositions were contained in the book. A miracle, as Voltaire assures us, retarded their downfall by some years. He may have heard the story at Saint-Ange. A niece of Pascal, who attended the school of the contumacious sisters, had a diseased eye, which was instantly cured by the application of a thorn from Christ's crown, one of the venerated relics of the convent. He adds, "Some persons who lived a long time with her assured me that her cure was very slow, which is highly probable. But it is not very probable that God, who performs no miracles to lead to our religion nineteen twentieths of our race to whom that religion is unknown or abhorrent, should have interrupted the order of nature on behalf of a little girl, in order to justify a dozen nuns in sustaining that Cornelius Jansenius did not write a dozen lines attributed to him." The Jesuits attempted miracles on their side, but Jesuit miracles had no weight with the people; and, later in the controversy, when a sister of Port Royal had a swollen leg miraculously cured, the prodigy did not save their convent from demolition. "The time was passed for such things, and Sister Gertrude had no uncle Pascal." [1]

At last, no man in France, from the Cardinal de Noailles

[1] Siècle de Louis XIV., chapter xxxvii.

to the obscurest peasant in La Vendée, could live in safety, or die in peace, or be sure of burial, unless he was prepared to sign any absurd or self-contradictory form of words which Le Tellier might choose to present to him. The confessor made the ignorant old king believe that a refusal to sign was flat rebellion, and he made the Pope sanction a refusal of the sacraments to such rebels. The Bull Unigenitus, so named from its first word, was the last of the anti-Jansenist thunder-bolts, launched in 1713, — the device of Le Tellier for bringing France completely under his authority. It condemned one hundred and one propositions, several of which seemed to good Catholics harmless and true. All the prisons were full of Jansenists, and Le Tellier was about to proceed to the extremity of calling a council to depose Cardinal de Noailles, the chief opponent of the Bull, when his hand was arrested, at midsummer, 1715, by the serious illness of the king. The cardinal had become the idol of the nation, which was now divided into two impassioned parties, *Accepters* and *Refusers*. The *Accepters*, as Voltaire remarks, were a hundred bishops, the Jesuits, the Capuchins, and the court; the *Refusers* were fifteen bishops and all the nation. To such a point can a priest in power reduce a great and intelligent nation when, in addition to the ordinary foibles and faults of man, he labors under the infirmity of believing a narrow creed.

This dismal business of the Bull was the absorbing topic in every circle during Arouet's stay at Saint-Ange. The controversy presented to his consideration a baleful *mélange* of incongruities: ambition and disinterestedness, cowardice and audacity, credulity and conviction, cruelty and tenderness, sincerity and craft, — a combination of the worst and best in man, which, in later years, this master of words could find no adequate word for in any language, and was therefore obliged to call it The Infamous Thing.

In August, 1715, hearing of the king's danger, he left his safe and advantageous retreat of Saint-Ange, and went to Paris, to witness the change in all things which the coming event was to effect. He should have gone to Versailles, where the king and court then were, and seen how ruthlessly the confessor used the king's dying agonies for his own pur-

poses. The memoirs of the Duke de Simon, which make this reign an eternal admonition to mankind, were not published in the lifetime of Voltaire, and he probably never knew precisely what passed in the palace at Versailles during the last few days of the king's life. The old man died with that peace and dignity with which the most injurious members of our race usually take leave of the world they have preyed upon. Men who pined for his death were moved at the spectacle, — all the court, perhaps, except one priest and one woman: his confessor, Le Tellier, and his wife, Madame de Maintenon. As the king grew weaker the priest pressed him all the more to fill the vacant bishoprics and abbeys, several of which were important. He had the list ready, and a partisan of his own designated for each of the fat things. But the king persisted in refusing. He said he had enough to answer for without taking upon himself, in the last hours of his life, the responsibility of making those appointments; and so, as the plain-spoken St. Simon expresses it, Le Tellier saw that rich prey escape him.[1]

The poor old king, as the end drew near, had some misgivings as to his ecclesiastical policy. He began to doubt whether the best mode of propitiating God is to force men to subscribe formulas they loathe, and to drive from their homes and country a hundred thousand virtuous families. His heart relented, too, toward the Cardinal de Noailles, his benevolent and gentle Archbishop of Paris, who had been high in his favor under the milder reign of his former confessor, Père la Chaise. Fixing his eyes upon Le Tellier and two cardinals who stood by, the king said, four days before his death, "I am sorry to leave the affairs of the church in the condition in which they are. In such matters I am perfectly ignorant. You know, and I call you to witness, that I have done nothing in relation thereto except what you wished, and I have done all that you wished. It is you, then, who must answer before God for what I have done, whether too much or too little. Once more I declare it, and I charge you with it before God. My conscience is clear; it is that of an ignorant man, who absolutely abandoned himself to you during the whole of this business."

[1] 11 St. Simon, 437, ed. of 1874.

The cardinals replied only by new flatteries, and the king resumed in a strain still more affecting: "In my ignorance I thought I could not do better for the peace of my conscience than to give myself up to you in full confidence. As to the Cardinal de Noailles, God is my witness that I do not hate him, and that I have always been sorry for what I felt it my duty to do against him."

Two of the courtiers exchanged glances at these words, and one of them said, in a low voice, "Ought we to let the king die without seeing his archbishop, and assuring him of pardon and reconciliation?"

The king, overhearing them, declared that, so far from objecting, he desired it. Here was a thunder-bolt, indeed, fallen into the midst of this group of serene and smiling priests and the woman, their tool, who was packing her trunks to be off before the breath was out of the king's body. They were equal to the emergency. "Oh, yes," said they, in substance, "let him come, by all means; but *first*, for the honor and safety of the good cause, he should obey the king by accepting the Bull." The king, fatigued, gave his consent without argument, and Le Tellier enjoyed a few days more of supremacy.

For eight days the drawing-room of the Duke of Orleans, who was to be regent during the minority, was so crowded with courtiers in the afternoon that, "speaking literally, a pin could not fall to the floor." But, August 29th, the king revived, ate two biscuits and drank a little wine with some relish. On that day, about two in the afternoon, the Duke de St. Simon visited the Duke of Orleans, and found no one there except the master, who, however, took this desertion in good part. He laughed, and told his visitor that not another human being had crossed his threshold all that day. "Such is man," remarks St. Simon. *Voilà le monde!* Two days after, on Sunday morning, September 1, 1715, the king's reign of seventy-two years was at an end. Our diarist concludes his narrative by an impressive statement: "The king's stomach and intestines were found to be of at least twice the capacity of men of his stature, — a very extraordinary circumstance, and the cause of his being so large and equal an eater."

CHAPTER XI.

EXILED FOR AN EPIGRAM.

Our young poet is in Paris again, never a safe place for him, from youth to hoary age. He has brought with him his play, — that "Œdipe" upon which he has been fitfully working for the last two years, and upon which he has staked his hopes of fame and fortune; for, even then, a successful play upon the Paris stage gave the author some standing and considerable gain.

As yet he possesses nothing, and is nobody; for, at twenty-two, even a good poet was no longer a prodigy. Nothing short of a striking and sustained success could justify his rejection of the career offered him by his father. At present, great lords, who laugh at his sallies, copy his verses, and make room for him at their suppers, speak and *think* of him as "little Arouet," and smile, perhaps, at the way he has of assuming an equality with them, — an amusing little fellow, with a surprising knack at hitting off verses. The old government of France was well enough described as a despotism tempered by epigrams; but the epigram-makers were always liable to find themselves in the condition of shorn lambs, without any one to temper the wind to them. To get "Œdipe" played was his object, a thing of vast difficulty to an untried author. Meanwhile, in the early days of the regency, he came near reaching fortune by a short cut, and he may well have been attentive to passing events. It was not certain, when the breath left the old king's body, who was to wield his authority, and certain friends of the poet had hopes of having a voice in the bestowal of good things.

Louis XIV., who was married at twenty-two to a princess of Austria, reared but one legitimate child, — Louis, the Dauphin, born in the second year of the marriage. The gossips of the court, in speaking of this prince, used to apply to him

an old saying, which proved to be his history: "Son of a king, father of a king, never a king." But he lived to the age of fifty; and as late as April, 1711, when his father was seventy-three, he seemed likely to disappoint the prophets. He had then three sons: (1) Louis, Duke of Bourgoyne, twenty-nine; (2) Philippe, Duke of Anjou, King of Spain, twenty-eight; (3) Charles, Duke of Berri, twenty-five. The hope and pride of France was the eldest of these sons, the Duke of Bourgoyne, who was married to an amiable and popular princess, and was the father of two little boys, one six years of age and the other fourteen months. This little family stood between France and calamities which France had abundant reason to dread, — a long minority and a disputed succession.

But it seemed sufficient. There were four males in the immediate line of succession, to say nothing of the hale and hearty old king, who could still tire out most of his court in the hunting-field, and bring down a bird on the wing as surely as the best of them. In April, 1711, Monseigneur the Dauphin died of the small-pox. In February following, of the same or a similar disease, died, in quick succession, the new dauphin, his wife, and their eldest son, leaving only their youngest boy, then two years old, sick and sickly, who became Louis XV. That feeble, flickering life was all that interposed between France and complications threatening civil war. And, finally, the Duke of Berri, as if to complete the ruin of this house, was killed in 1714 by a fall from his horse. Knowing what we know of the history of France, we cannot wonder that the people of Paris should have rushed into the streets and filled the churches whenever it was noised abroad that this little boy had a bad cold.

The old king had a dozen or more illegitimate children, most of whom he caused to be formally legitimated. He assigned them magnificent châteaux and princely revenues, and compelled their recognition as princes of the blood royal. His favorite among them was Louis-Auguste de Bourbon, Duke du Maine, a man of forty, married to a profuse, ambitious princess, who lived in reckless magnificence at Sceaux, six miles south of Paris. For some years, the "court" of the Duchess du Maine at Sceaux had presented an intentional contrast to that of the old king, who, during the thirty years' ascendency of

Madame de Maintenon, had a smile for no courtier whom he often missed at the daily mass. The Duchess du Maine loved pleasure, loved literature as one of the forms of pleasure, cultivated literary persons, gave splendid fêtes out-of-doors and indoors, and played a conspicuous part in the pageantry of life. The duke, her husband, was a well-disposed, weak man, who stood in awe of his father, and was also very submissive to his wife.

The people of France were far from approving the lawless, enforced ascendency of these *bâtards* over the whole nobility of the kingdom. France was still — nay, had been always, and is now — a virtuous nation. In spite of the bad example of her kings and priests, in spite of her agreeable Ninons and her repulsive saints, her sour Jansenists and her gay abbés, the mass of the people of France and the best of her educated class have believed in virtue, have practiced self-control, have observed those fundamental moralities from which all happiness comes. They could not, therefore, be brought to regard this Duke du Maine as a prince of their royal line, — a soldier who had not behaved well in the presence of the enemy, when a doting Xerxes of a father had intrusted him with the lives and honor of Frenchmen better than himself.

The dying king was persuaded to impose this favorite son upon France as the guardian of the heir to the crown, the commander of the royal guards during the minority, and King of France if the little Louis should die before maturity.

Louis XIV. had lived seventy-seven years, reigned seventy-two, and governed fifty-four, without ever meeting one human being who could stand before him and oppose his will. The spirit of mastery, a thing essentially barbarous, had been nourished in him to such a point that he will remain for this alone an interesting study to all time. His tutors began early to instill it into him. Among the curiosities shown in the imperial library at Petersburgh is a leaf of a copy-book used by Louis XIV. when he was a dull little boy, learning to write. His writing-master set him as a copy, at the top of the page, French words signifying, —

HOMAGE IS DUE TO KINGS; THEY DO WHATEVER THEY LIKE.

The child wrote these words six times upon the leaf, in a

large, unsteady hand,[1] and it was nearly all he ever learned of the kingly state. When he came, late in life, to write instructions for the guidance of his son, he did little more than enlarge upon this copy-book text. Thus he wrote: "He who has given kings to men wills that they should be respected as his lieutenants, reserving to himself alone the right to inquire into their conduct. His will is that whosoever is born a subject should obey without question. Everything there is, in the whole extent of our dominions, belongs to *us*. The money in our treasury, the money remaining in the hands of our collectors, and the money which we leave as currency in the business of our people ought to be equally under our control." Again, "As the lives of subjects are the king's own property, he ought to have all the more care to preserve them."[2] Holding such opinions as these, he was induced by the Duke du Maine and Madame de Maintenon, a week before his death, to sign a codicil, which gave the duke the substance of power during the minority, and left to the Duke of Orleans little more than the title of regent. Then the usual mass was performed, and the king communed; after which he sent for his nephew of Orleans, and, as the terror-stricken St. Simon records, "With Jesus Christ still upon his lips, he assured the duke that he would find nothing in his will with which he would not be content."

There is a great deal of difference between a living and a dead lion. The old king had not been dead two days before the codicil had been set aside, the Duke du Maine reduced several degrees toward his native nullity, and the Duke of Orleans confirmed Regent of France, with power all but absolute. The brilliant court of the Duchess du Maine at Sceaux suffered an eclipse. It remained the haunt of "the pleasures," but did not become the seat of power. No woman, as Voltaire once remarked, ever ruined a husband with more grace than she; but she did not enjoy the opportunity, which women have since done, of ruining France. The duchess set seriously at work intriguing to undo what had been done, and thus Sceaux became a sort of rendezvous of disaffection, veiled by an apparent devotion to pleasure.

[1] Histoire de France, par Henri Martin, tome xiv. page 616.

[2] 2 Œuvres de Louis XIV., 336, etc., edition of 1806.

The literary circle of the Temple were also disappointed at the beginning of the regency. The Grand Prior, Philippe de Vendôme, returned to his palace in the Temple after long exile, and his ancient comrade, the Duke of Orleans, desired to appoint him a member of his council. The virtuous St. Simon rose indignant at the rumor, and roused all his brother dukes. Finally, he told the regent that if that debauched scoundrel entered the council, and thus took precedence of the nobility, the dukes would resign their places and leave the court. The Grand Prior was not appointed, and had nothing to give little Arouet except verses, suppers, too much wine, and a bad example of getting drunk every evening.

That young man (a moth amid these flaming candles), not aware how fate was playing with him, resumed his old way of life in Paris, always busy and inquisitive. Old things were passing away, and he was observant of the change. On the day of the king's funeral, he was out on the road to St. Denis, near Paris, where for eleven hundred years kings of France had been buried. It was more like a festival than a funeral. "I saw little tents," he records, "set up along the road, in which people drank, sang, laughed. The sentiments of the citizens of Paris had passed into the minds of the populace. The Jesuit, Le Tellier, was the principal cause of this universal joy. I heard several spectators say that the torches which lighted the procession ought to be used for setting fire to the houses of the Jesuits." France, as he says elsewhere, forgave the king his mistresses, but not his confessor. He may have contributed to the merriment of the crowd by a burlesque invitation to the funeral of the Bull Unigenitus, which was circulating in these days of gayety and relief. He was getting a kind of reputation that led knowing people to point to *him* when anything particularly impudent appeared. The burlesque spoke of the deceased Constitution as the natural daughter of Clement XI., and she was said to have died of grief at the loss of *seventy-seven* per cent. Le Tellier was to head the mourners, and the Cardinal Archbishop of Paris, who had profited much by the dame's decease, had been named to the Abbey of *Notre Dame des Victoires*. And, indeed, it was through the aid of the Cardinal de Noailles that the regent quieted that ridiculous and deadly dispute. A sinner with a

little sense and good nature found it easy to heal a wound which the pious old king had only touched to inflame.[1]

What a joyful opening of prison doors the young poet witnessed in those days! The first time the regent sat in his official seat in his cabinet, he called for a list of all the persons then in prison through *lettres de cachet*, — the mere order of the king. Upon inquiring into the causes of their detention, he discovered that in the case of many prisoners no living creature knew any cause, nor was there any record of a cause. They had been simply forgotten! A large number of prisoners did not themselves know, and could not guess, why they had been arrested. The worst case, out of a number of extremely bad ones, was that of an Italian, who had been in the Bastille thirty-three years without knowing why. Thirty-three years before, on the day of his arrival in Paris, he had been arrested and conveyed to the Bastille, and there he had lived and grown old, surviving all his family and friends. When the regent set free all these forgotten victims of priestly arrogance and ministerial intrigue, this poor Italian asked to be allowed to remain in the Bastille; and he lived there, by the regent's allowance, all the rest of his days. But the Duke of Orleans did not abolish *lettres de cachet*, which made these appalling abuses of the royal authority possible, — nay, easy and unavoidable.

The autumn and winter following the king's death, our young poet frequented more than ever the society of the Temple, working zealously also to perfect his play and procure its acceptance at the theatre. It was through his zeal to improve his "Œdipe" and make friends for it that the moth came too near the flame, and had its flight suddenly arrested. He read "Œdipe," one evening, at the abode of a literary and festive member of the Temple coterie, Abbé de Bussi, where, among the guests, were the Abbé Chaulieu and the Grand Prior, then in full intrigue to be reckoned among the princes of the blood royal. Supper over, the young poet read his play, a wonderful work, indeed, for a lad of nineteen to con-

[1] Le Tellier, appointed by the will of the late king confessor to Louis XV., and having nothing to do, owing to the tender age of that monarch, asked the regent what was to be his present distinction. "That is no affair of mine," answered the regent; "address yourself to your superiors." (Mémoires de Duclos.)

ceive, — a poem full of spirit and fire, cast in the ancient mould, but containing passages, and even scenes, only surpassed by Racine and Corneille. The old critics favored the young dramatist with their remarks. "That supper," he wrote to Chaulieu soon after, "did great good to my tragedy, and I believe it would be only necessary to drink four or five times with you to produce an excellent work. Socrates gave lessons in bed, and you at table; hence your lessons are doubtless more agreeable than his were." This reading was the more delightful to the Abbé de Chaulieu because he was then seventy-seven years of age, and, from the failure of his eyesight, could scarcely read himself.

Old as the abbé was, his continent and temperate ancestors had put such vigorous life into him that he was in love this winter with a young lady in the service of the Duchess du Maine in the capacity of reader; and when the duchess removed from Sceaux to the Tuileries he had convenient opportunity of paying court to his beloved. The lady (Baroness de Staal) gives us in her Memoirs extensive love poems which the amorous old abbé sent her, as well as several anecdotes showing unusual ardor in a lover of seventy-seven. He lent her his carriage every day when she would accept it. He wrote every morning and came every evening. He assailed her with costly presents; and when he reproached her for refusing them, and alluded to the extreme plainness of her attire, she made him the celebrated answer, "I am adorned with all that my costume lacks." The abbé's little lackey, who usually conveyed his tender epistles, came to her one day in sorrow, and told her his master had dismissed him. "Go home," said she, "and tell him you are going to stay, for such is my pleasure." The abbé submitted; the tiger was retained.[1]

The abbé could not omit to pay homage to the duchess, who was more than ever disposed to favor literary men, of whom she made use in her struggle to keep her rank. Every kind of writing appeared on behalf of the "legitimated princes," — poems, satires, couplets, memoirs, — the duchess herself lending a hand, and all her court rummaging for precedents in former reigns. "She employed most of her nights in this

[1] Mémoires de Madame de Staal.

work," records the Baroness de Staal. "The immense volumes heaped upon her bed, like mountains overwhelming her, made her look, as she said, like the giant buried under Mount Ætna." Never was she in better mood to listen to the Abbé de Chaulieu's praises of the wondrous Arouet, and the fine tragedy he was trying to get accepted at the theatre. The poet was presented to her most serene highness; he joined in her moonlight festivals — her "white nights" — at Sceaux; he had the honor of reading "Œdipe" to her; and he became one of the frequenters of her "court."

He knew how to adapt himself to such scenes as these, and even at this age he had the art of assuming an equality with these artificial magnates of the world without offending them. No man ever equaled him in this art, and no man ever had so much occasion for it. The Grand Prior, for example, who was of princely rank, was desirous of being styled Royal Highness, instead of plain Highness. It was a stroke of art, as well as wit, in this youth to address him as his Warbling Highness (*son Altesse Chansonière*). The Marquis d'Argenson, a school-fellow of Arouet, relates this anecdote in his Memoirs, as an instance of "the tone of ease which he always took with great lords;" and it was to the same marquis that Voltaire once explained the secret of his ability to hold this tone.

"Souls," said Voltaire, "communicate with souls, and can measure one another without need of an intermediate body. It is only the greatness or the worth of a soul that ought to frighten or intimidate us. To fear or to respect the body and its accessories — force, beauty, royalty, rank, office — is pure imbecility. Men are born equal and die equal. Let us respect the virtue, the merit of their souls, and despise the imperfections of those souls."

This principle, he said, he had early adopted and practiced. But there was another lesson which he learned later, though he needed it now.

"Doubtless," he continued, "we should by prudence avoid the evil which that physical force can do us, as we should guard ourselves against a crowned bull, an enthroned monkey, a savage dog let loose upon us. Let us beware of such. Let us even endeavor, if possible, to moderate them, to soften

them; but this sentiment is very different from the esteem and respect which we owe to souls."

Elsewhere he gives this maxim: "By having it well *at heart* that men are equal, and clearly *in the head* that externals distinguish them, one can get on very well in the world."

Time passed, and he made no progress with the actors. During the winter he read his play and parts of it to other friends, never weary of retouching it. In the Lent of 1716 he was again a guest at Saint-Ange; "living upon pheasants and partridges," as he wrote in verse to the Grand Prior, "instead of red herring and water-cress, which, in these days, blessed of God, every monk and bigot eats." Again he listened to M. de Caumartin, who "carried in his brain the living history of his time, — all the deeds and all the words of the great men and of the wits, a thousand charming trifles, songs new and old, and the exhaustless annals of the fools of Paris."

In May, 1716, he was in Paris swelling those annals. The press still teemed with writings, in prose and verse, against the regent, most of which, as the regent well knew, were inspired by the Duchess du Maine. He was a good-natured prince, but we know from St. Simon that verses accusing him of monstrous crimes against nature and natural affection cut him to the heart sometimes. One innocent epigram Arouet composed about this time, and how many more we know not. Among other reforms the regent reduced the horses in the royal stables one half. Arouet's epigram intimated that His Royal Highness would do better to dismiss one half the asses that had surrounded his late majesty. There were also couplets and other verses afloat which reflected upon the young widow of the late Duke of Berri, the regent's own daughter. This lady was a conspicuous defier of the conventionalities. Madame de Genlis reports that she herself saw a portrait of the Duchess of Berri as Europa riding upon the bull, painted from life. Be that as it may, there were satirical verses in every hand assuming that she was a woman capable of every excess and every indecorum.

Nothing is more probable than that Arouet gratified the Duchess du Maine by writing satirical poems. "The duchess," says the biographer of the regent (M. Capefigue), "dic-

tated ideas to the poets, and young Arouet was not the last to throw himself into the struggle against the Duke of Orleans." He did not struggle long. Early in May, 1716, the old Marquis of Dangeau made the following entry in his diary: "Little Arouet, a very satirical and a very imprudent poet, has been exiled. He has been sent to Tulle, and is already out of Paris."

The order of exile, dated May 5, 1716, vouchsafed no explanation of the cause: "The intention of His Royal Highness is that the Sieur Arouet, the son, should be sent to Tulle." No more. Tulle was then, as it is now, a manufacturing town, nearly three hundred miles south of Paris, — three hundred miles from the theatre, from the Temple, from Sceaux, from Saint-Ange, from everything to which this imprudent poet looked for a career. *Tulle!* What a cutting retort from a regent unable to meet epigram with epigram! Tulle had not yet given its name to a delicate and beautiful fabric which ladies love. In 1716 it was a town of many tan-yards, the savor of which was familiar to the ancestors of our poet, but not on that account the less offensive to him. Candles were made there, and nails, and coarse woolen cloths, and other commodities, of little interest to the author of "Œdipe" and the guest of Saint-Ange.

Even Arouet, *père*, deemed Tulle too severe, and it was at his solicitation that the regent changed the place of exile from Tulle to Sully-upon-the-Loire, less than a hundred miles from the theatre of his hopes. Why Sully? Because, said Maitre Arouet, the young man has relations there who, "he hoped, would be able by their good advice to correct his imprudence and moderate his vivacity." The youth may have had relations in that region, but he lived during the whole of his exile in a fine old château belonging to the Duke of Sully, which Henry IV. had given to the family when the voice of a Sully was second only to his own in the councils of the state. This young man had remarkable luck in falling upon his feet. What better could the Duke of Sully himself do than repair to his château on the Loire during the delightful days of May? "I write to you," the poet said to the Abbé de Chaulieu, after two months' stay at the château, "from an abode that would be the most agreeable in the world if I had not been

exiled to it, and where there is nothing wanting to my perfect happiness except the liberty of leaving."

To the Marquise de Mimeure, a lady to whom he had read "Œdipe," he wrote some time after: "It would be delicious for me to remain at Sully if I were only allowed to go away. The duke is the most amiable of men, and the one to whom I am under the greatest obligations. His château is in the most beautiful situation in the world, with a magnificent wood near by. . . . It is quite just that they should give me an agreeable exile, for I am absolutely innocent of the unworthy songs attributed to me. You would be astonished, perhaps, if I should tell you that in this beautiful wood we have some *white nights*, as at Sceaux, in a grand saloon of elms lighted by an infinite number of lanterns, where was served, the other evening, a magnificent supper to the music of a band, followed by a ball of more than a hundred masks superbly attired."

The hunting season filled the château with sportsmen, "who," as he wrote, "spend the lovely days in assassinating partridges." For his own part, he had "some interest with Apollo, but not much with Diana." "I hunt little, and rhyme a great deal." He told his correspondent not to make known his happiness in Paris, for they *might* let him stay at Sully long enough for him to become unhappy there.

But all this time he was scheming to get back to Paris. As it was his pen that exiled him, it was his pen that brought about his return. He wrote a poem, addressed to the regent, in that mingled tone of familiarity and homage which marked his dealings with "the great." He concluded by an adroit allusion to his own case: "Beneficent toward all, to me alone severe, you doom me to a rigorous exile. But I dare appeal from yourself to yourself. Before you I wish no support but innocence. I implore your justice, not your clemency. Do but read these lines, and judge of their worth. See what verses are imputed to me, and see what I write."

He sent copies of this poem to favorites of the regent, asking them to "cast an eye over it," and tell him frankly if it was worthy of such a prince. He begged them to send critical comments upon the poem, that he might improve it to the uttermost of his powers. To one, "It shall not see the light until *you* judge it worthy of publication." To another, "If

I had the honor to be better known to you than I am, you would see that in this composition I speak as I think." These tactics were rewarded with success ; and about the time when great lords, tired of assassinating partridges, came to Paris to pursue fair and featherless bipeds, Arouet also arrived, to resume his efforts to get his tragedy accepted at the theatre. It was time he had *something* to show in reply to his father's remonstrances ; for he was approaching twenty-three, and was still a hanger-on at the houses of other men, dependent upon his father for all except his lodging. A Duchess du Maine may have given him some golden louis ; princes and princesses did such things then, and poets submitted to accept the bounty, though they usually refrained from recording it.

As a specimen of the songs of which he was accused in these green days, take this upon Madame de Maintenon, which has waited a hundred and sixty years to see the light of print: —

"Que l'Eternel est grand ! Que sa bonté puissante
A comblé mes désirs, a payé mes travaux !
Je naquis demoiselle et je devins servante :
Je lavai la vaisselle et frottai les bureaux.

"J'eus bientôt des amants : je ne fus point ingrate ;
De Villarceaux longtemps j'amusai les transports ;
Il me fit épouser ce fameux cul-de-jatte
Qui vivait de ses vers, comme moi de mon corps.

"Il mourut. Je fus pauvre, et vieille devenue,
Mes amants, dégoûtés, me laissaient toute nue,
Lorsqu'un tyran me crut propre encore au plaisir.

"Je lui plus, il m'aima : je fis la Madeleine,
Par des refus adroits j'irritai ses désirs ;
Je lui parlai du diable, il eut peur .... Je suis reine."[1]

The Duke of Orleans did not love Madame de Maintenon, but the regent of France could not allow such verses, aimed at the wife of the late king.

[1] Le Sottisier de Voltaire, Paris, 1880.

CHAPTER XII.

IN THE BASTILLE.

THE Duke of Orleans, regent during the minority of the young king, was forty-one years of age at the death of Louis XIV. He was of medium stature, inclining to stoutness, of open, engaging countenance, rosy-cheeked and black-haired. We may say of him that he deserved to be virtuous, so well disposed was he, so amiable in his demeanor, so affectionate in his family, so attentive to all the ameliorating etiquettes of his rank. In his public capacity he did several wise and liberal actions. He promptly suppressed the odious Le Tellier, and stopped the ravages of the Bull Unigenitus. He refused even to entertain the proposition of expunging the vast oppressive debt of France by a formal bankruptcy. He lessened the expenses of the court, dismissing, as our Arouet saucily advised, a portion of the late king's asses, as well as selling half his majesty's horses.

But one condition of all genuine and lasting success in this world is habitual obedience to the physical laws. Bad men are as much subject to this condition as good men, because violation of those laws is a waste of power. This rosy Bacchus of a prince did not comply with the indispensable preliminary. He was a child of his period, — of *our* period, — when so many young men, on discovering that there are errors in the accepted scheme of the universe, assume also that ginger will not burn in the mouth. Add to this his absurd "rank," his pernicious wealth, his perverse education, the example of his ancestors, living and dead, and the force of habit. After living twenty years of mature life with no object but pleasure, suddenly, by a series of deaths which no one could have thought remotely probable, this round and ruddy Bourbon finds himself master of France. And of such a France! A fair and fertile land exhausted by the long reign of the

most expensive and incompetent of kings, and required to confront, all at once, a cruel accumulation of evils. The old king was dead and forgotten. The new king was a little boy, shooting sparrows for his amusement. The regent had the honor of serving his countrymen in the character of scapegoat, and in that character his success was complete.

At first he attended to public business with some steadiness and assiduity; but he soon fell into that routine of self-indulgence which gave so much plausibility to the worst calumnies. He began the labors of the day, as his friend, the Duke of St. Simon, sorrowfully records, about two or half-past two in the afternoon, when he entered his dressing-room, took his chocolate, and received "all the world," that is, all the court and nobility who had the *entrée* at the king's *lever*. He chatted familiarly with them for half an hour or more, and then gave formal audience to individuals having business with him. He usually paid, next, a brief visit to the duchess, his wife; and, invariably, once during the day, he went to see the little king in his wing of the palace. The court remarked with pleasure that the regent, both on entering and on leaving the presence of the child, then seven years old, bowed as low and as "reverently" as if the king had been of full age. Frequently he visited his mother, that plain-spoken princess whose wondrous Memoirs complete our knowledge of the later court of the old king; and her also he treated with due respect. He next presided at a short session of the council, and transacted with ministers the indispensable routine of business.

This brought him to five or six o'clock, after which he gave himself wholly up to pleasure. On returning from the opera or the theatre he liked to have a gay and free supper with his familiars, of which the virtuous St. Simon gives us a sorry account. The company at these suppers he justly describes as "strange." The regent's mistress of the hour was sure to be present; sometimes, a number of opera girls; *often*, the Duchess of Berri, the regent's daughter; usually, a dozen men noted for their debauchery or their talents, — dukes, ministers, lords, and poets; also, some ladies of "middling virtue" (*moyenne vertu*). The fare at these repasts was "exquisite." It was cooked in kitchens made on purpose,

adjoining the supper-room, in silver vessels; and often the guests lent a hand to the cooks in preparing some of the dishes. The conversation was the freest possible, and spared no one, living or dead, present or absent, man or woman. Such a supper, at which the best wine in the world flows free, cannot but become at last a noisy, vulgar debauch; and, doubtless, our Polonius, St. Simon, uttered only the literal truth when he wrote, "They drank deeply and of the best wine; they grew warm; they talked shamelessly with uncovered bosom, and strove which could utter the grossest impieties; and when they had made some noise, and were very drunk, they went to bed, to recommence on the morrow." From the moment of the regent's sitting down to supper until the next morning, he was "barricaded" against all approach of business. He would see no one, and receive no message, upon the most pressing affair of state, even though it concerned his own immediate safety.

To increase the ill effect of this example, he trampled upon the most cherished decorums of his country, having sometimes a wilder orgy than usual on such a day as Good Friday, — a thing which even bad Catholics usually avoid. Robust and capable of enduring great excesses, he had a particular admiration for men who could go farther than himself in debauchery. "I have heard him," says St. Simon, "express ceaseless admiration, carried to the point of esteem, for the Grand Prior, because he had gone to bed drunk for forty years, had always kept mistresses openly, and spoken continually against piety and religion." The old king, indeed, once said of him: "Do you know what my nephew is? He is a braggart of crimes which he does not commit."

A prince who lives so in the sight of a distressed and anxious people will be taken seriously, and will be accused of offenses far worse than those he commits. The old king brought the kingdom to the verge of ruin; he drove from it the most valuable citizens it possessed; he suspended the growth of its intellect; he prepared the way for evils from which France has not yet ceased to suffer; he was to France all the harm and hindrance an individual could be. But he observed the decorums; he was studious of appearances. Every day he went to mass; his mistresses were ladies of

rank; he never passed any woman of any degree without a courteous salutation; he exacted and observed every etiquette. He never appeared except to dazzle or impress; he was the histrionic king to perfection; and to this day he stalks across the historic scene in his favorite character of the "Grand Monarque," much to the satisfaction of many spectators.

The regent, on the contrary, was most harshly judged. Even his doting fondness for his daughter, the Duchess of Berri, received from the lying scribblers of the time the worst conceivable interpretation, and a hundred epigrams insinuated that he had destroyed by poison the many lives that had till lately interposed between himself and the supreme power. There never lived a man less capable than he of such enormities; but accusations of that nature were the inevitable penalty of a disregard of appearances in so conspicuous a personage, and there were powerful individuals interested in making the regent odious.

Among the scurrilous things circulating from hand to hand in Paris, in the spring of 1717, was an inscription, in schoolboy Latin, of the following purport: —

A BOY REIGNING;
A MAN NOTORIOUS FOR POISONINGS
AND INCESTS ADMINISTERING;
COUNCILS IGNORANT AND UNSTABLE;
RELIGION MORE UNSTABLE;
THE TREASURY EMPTY;
PUBLIC FAITH VIOLATED;
INFURIATE WRONG TRIUMPHANT;
DANGER OF GENERAL SEDITION IMMINENT;
THE COUNTRY SACRIFICED
TO THE HOPE OF A CROWN;
AN INHERITANCE BASELY ANTICIPATED;
FRANCE ABOUT TO PERISH.

This inscription was probably appended to a drawing of some kind, — a weeping figure of France, perhaps, or of a monumental structure. Under a paternal government nothing of this nature can be too trifling for official notice, and, accordingly, the "Puero Regnante," as the inscription was called from its opening words, was considered by the ministry, as well as eagerly scanned and circulated in society.

Another piece had a much wider circulation, and made its way even into the provinces. The French know better than any other people how to catch the attention of readers languid from a satiety of sweets; and, among their other devices, there is one of beginning every verse or stanza of a poem with the same word or words. This piece was so arranged, nearly every line beginning with *J'ai vu*, "I have seen;" and hence the poem was commonly called the "I-have-seens." These are specimen sentences, from which the reader will perceive that the poem was written by a Jansenist: —

"*I have seen* the Bastille and a thousand other prisons filled with brave citizens, faithful subjects.

"*I have seen* the people wretched under a rigorous servitude.

"*I have seen* the soldiery perishing of hunger, thirst, indignation, and rage.

"*I have seen* a devil in the guise of a woman [Maintenon] ruling the kingdom, sacrificing her God, her faith, her soul, to seduce the spirit of a too credulous king.

"*I have seen* the altar polluted.

"*I have seen* Port Royal demolished.

"*I have seen* the blackest of all possible acts, which the waters of the entire ocean could not purge, and which remote posterity will scarcely be able to believe, — bodies stamped with the seal of immortality removed by profane and sacrilegious hands from that sojourn of gracious men, Port Royal.

"*I have seen* the prelacy sold or made the reward of imposture.

"*I have seen* nonentities raised to the highest rank.

"*I have seen* — and this includes all — the Jesuit adored.

"*I have seen* these evils during the fatal reign of a prince whom formerly the wrath of Heaven accorded to our ardent desires.

"*I have seen* these evils, and I am not twenty years old."

This poem was written by A. L. le Brun, the author of the words of a long-forgotten opera and other hack work of that day. It had been circulating for some months, and as yet the detectives of the police had not discovered the writer. They were equally at fault in their chase after the author of the "Puero Regnante." But every knowing finger in Paris pointed to Arouet as the probable author of both these effusions, and certainly of the "I-have-seens." Had he not been exiled last year for something of the kind? Was he not living, after his return from exile, in furnished lodgings, and not

at his father's house? Did he not frequent the apartments and the châteaux of the disaffected? And was he not notorious for satire? True, he was nearly twenty-three years old, instead of not twenty; but few people knew his age, and he was supposed to be imprudent enough for much less than twenty.

In vain he denied being the author of the "I-have-seens," which was running in his name before he had so much as heard of it. As he was passing through a small country town, — probably on his return from a visit to Saint-Ange, in the spring of 1717, — the literary people of the place insisted on his reciting to them this poem, which they said was a masterpiece. "It was useless," he records, "for me to assert that I was not the author, and that the piece was miserable. They would not believe me, but admired my reticence; and I thus gained among them, without thinking of it, the reputation of a great poet and a very modest man."

Pursuing his journey, he reached his abode in Paris, where business of the utmost importance awaited him. His "Œdipe" had been accepted at the theatre! It was about to be put into rehearsal; the coffee-houses were expecting it; great lords and ladies were interested in its production. Soon after his arrival he had a visit from one of those gentlemen, much employed by the regent, who were then called spies, but to whom we now apply the politer word, detectives. This individual, Beauregard by name, a captain in the French army, was a coffee-house acquaintance of the poet. Those were the halcyon days of the coffee-house on both sides of the Channel, — the days when Mr. Addison held court at Button's, and Fontenelle was the oracle at Laurent's. The regent kept spies frequenting those haunts, and so Captain Beauregard obtained the right to drop in upon Arouet, at the Green Basket, on the Island, Rue de la Calandre, near Notre Dame. Beauregard's official report of the conversation has been preserved, but it does not read like truth: —

Arouet (lounging on a sofa). — "Anything new?"

Beauregard. — "A number of things have appeared against the Duke of Orleans and the Duchess of Berri."

Arouet. — "Are any of them considered good?"

Beauregard. — "There is thought to be much wit in them, and

they are all laid to you. For my part, I do not believe it; it is impossible to write such things at your age."

AROUET. — "You are mistaken in supposing that I am not the author of the works that have appeared during my absence. I sent all my things to M. le Blanc; and, to put the Duke of Orleans off the scent, I went into the country during the carnival, and stayed two months with M. de Caumartin, who saw those writings first; and afterwards I sent them to Paris. Since I cannot get my revenge upon the Duke of Orleans in a certain way, I will not spare him in my satires."

BEAUREGARD. — "Why, what has the Duke of Orleans done to you?"

AROUET (springing to his feet in a rage). — "What! You don't know what that b—— did to me? He exiled me because I let the public know that that Messalina of a daughter of his was — no better than she should be."

The interview here ended; but, the next day, the spy called again at the Green Basket, and found, sitting with the poet, the Count d'Argental, who was to remain his devoted friend for sixty years. The spy took from his pocket-book a copy of the "Puero Regnante."

AROUET. — "What have you got that 's curious?" (Recognizing the inscription.) "As to that, I wrote it at M. de Caumartin's, but a good while before I left."

Two days after, the assiduous spy called once more, and again found M. d'Argental with the poet.

BEAUREGARD. — "How is this, my dear friend? You boast of having written the 'Puero Regnante,' and yet I have just heard, from very good authority, that it was written by a Jesuit professor."

AROUET. — "It is of no consequence to me whether you believe me or not. Those Jesuits are like the jay in the fable: they borrow the peacock's feathers with which to decorate themselves."

The spy further reported him as saying everywhere in Paris that the Duchess of Berri was gone to a hunting lodge in the Bois de Boulogne to be confined, and as uttering a "quantity of other things unfit to be recorded." [1]

If the young man made these avowals, which is doubtful, he must have done so by way of burlesque. He probably did not write the "Puero Regnante." If he wrote it, it is

[1] La Jeunesse de Voltaire, page 129.

the only composition in the hundred volumes of his works in which no trace of the Voltairian quality can be discerned. But the spy's report of the conversations served as a basis to the subsequent proceedings. Scurrilous compositions fluttered in every drawing-room. The regent knew that the "court" of the Duchess du Maine was the source of much of this hostile literature, and it was believed that Arouet was "the soul of that society." The duchess herself was the soul of it, and there is no reason to think that Arouet was trusted or employed by her in her political schemes. We know, however, that those who administer paternal governments are content with slight evidence when a victim is very much wanted and their spies are off the true scent.

There is a tradition that he had a warning of what was in store for him. On an afternoon in May he was strolling in the gardens of the Palais-Royal, when some one summoned him to the presence of the regent, who was also walking there.

"Monsieur Arouet," said the regent, "I bet I will make you see something you have *never* seen!"

"Indeed, and what is it, Monseigneur?"

"The Bastille," replied the regent.

"Ah, Monseigneur," said the poet, "I consider it seen!"

It may have been on this very Friday, May 14th, that he saw the Czar Peter of Russia, then on one of his tours for improvement. The Czar had been a week in Paris, hurrying from shop to shop, from lion to lion, himself the lion of the year to the people of Paris. This was one of his busiest days: at six in the morning in the grand gallery of the Tuileries, examining plans and maps; then to the Louvre; next to the garden of the Tuileries, from which all other visitors were expelled, and where he lingered to admire a swinging bridge; dinner at eleven; after dinner a visit to Madame at the Palais-Royal; then to the opera with the regent, where he sat in the grand box and called for beer, and the regent gave him the beverage with his own hands; finally, to supper with the Duke de Villars and other military men. Our poet saw the Czar as he was going the rounds of the shops; "neither of us," as he wrote forty years later, "then thinking that I should one day be his historian."

The next morning, Saturday, May 16th, Arouet, not so early

a riser as the Czar, was roused from sleep at his lodgings, at the sign of the Green Basket, by a strange noise on the stairs. Arrests upon *lettres de cachet* were made with the utmost suavity of manner, but with a considerable show of force; and half a dozen men cannot ascend a staircase without waking a sleeping poet. Upon opening his eyes he saw the crowd at the foot of his bed, one of whom drew near, touched him upon the shoulder with a white wand, and with all possible politeness explained their business; perhaps handing him a slip of paper, on which it was briefly stated: —

"The intention of His Royal Highness is that the Sieur Arouet be arrested and conducted to the Bastille."

He was allowed, it seems, to go to his dressing-room, and, while he and his valet were getting on their clothes, one of the officers sealed up his papers, and another took an inventory of his effects. It so chanced that the spy Beauregard, who had given the information upon which the arrest was made, "found himself present" on this occasion, also, and had further conversation with the unsuspecting victim.

"Why are you arrested?" he asked.

"I know nothing about it," the prisoner replied.

"My opinion is," said the spy, "that your writings are the cause."

"There are no proofs that I have written anything, for I have never confided my writings to any but true friends."

"Is there nothing in these papers to convict you?"

"No; for, luckily, the exempt did not get hold of the pair of breeches in which there were some verses and songs. I seized an opportunity, while I was dressing, to throw them where — it won't be easy to find them."

So reports the spy, and it is possible some conversation resembling this occurred. The place indicated was searched, to the extreme discomfiture of the inmates of the Green Basket, and to the spoiling of several barrels of beer in its cellar; but no scrap of offensive writing was found. He was permitted to take with him no article whatever except the clothes he wore; but before leaving he managed to dash upon paper and send (probably by his valet) a short note to the Duke of Sully, who had so happily alleviated his late exile: —

"M. de Basin, lieutenant of the short robe, is here to arrest

me this morning. I can tell you nothing more about it. I know not what I am accused of. My innocence assures me of your protection. I shall be too happy if you do me the honor to accord it to me."

That done, he was conducted down-stairs to the street, assisted into a close carriage, the lieutenant following, and driven slowly away, a file of men walking on each side of the vehicle, and the passers-by looking on with serious countenances. By the tortuous streets of old Paris the cortège must have gone a mile and a half before it reached the Bastille, and the prisoner could see through the blinds of the coach the ancient fortress rising gloomy and vast from the banks of the Seine.

"Who goes there?" cries the nearest sentinel.

"Command of the king," replies the sergeant of the escort.

An officer of the guard appears, to whom the *lettre de cachet* is shown; upon seeing which he strikes a bell to summon the officials of the château, and permits the whole cortège to enter the first inclosure. The guard turns out; the officials stand ready; the coach comes to a stand. The lieutenant of the king opens the door of the carriage. Every soldier covers his face with his hat, so as not to see the prisoner, and if by chance there is some one in the court who has no hat on he turns his back, or instantly withdraws. The prisoner alights. He is the king's guest; this is one of the royal châteaux; and he is conducted with the utmost respect to the office of the governor, who gives a receipt to the commander of the escort, and presents him to officers of his own. They conduct the prisoner into the next room, where he is respectfully but thoroughly searched, deprived of every article he possesses which does not strictly belong to his apparel, and an inventory is taken.

He was obliged, as we have seen, to surrender at least one letter from his Olimpe, then an unhappy Baroness de Winterfield; he a less unhappy prisoner of state. A good pocketful of money was found upon him: "six louis of gold" and a dozen or more of other coins, besides "an eye-glass, a pair of scissors, a bunch of keys, tablets, and some papers." After he has signed the inventory, he is taken back to the governor's room, where he is formally handed over to the officers of the Bastille.

The draw-bridge falls; he is led across it; he enters the grand inclosure; the gate closes; he is in the Bastille. Under-officers show him to an eight-sided room in one of the towers, shut the door upon him, turn the huge key, drive home the bolts, and leave him to his reflections, with ten feet of solid and ancient masonry between him and the bright May-day world of Paris.[1]

They gave him a pretty good room; not one of the suites reserved for princes and favorites, but a room of fair size, in the lower story of one of the towers, which had been tenanted by a Duke of Montmorenci, by a Biron, by a Bassompierre, and in which De Saci had translated the Bible. From this time onward, as long as the Bastille stood, it was shown to visitors as Voltaire's room. It had a fire-place, and the occupant could add anything to the scanty furniture that he chose. He was the king's guest; the king maintained him, but if a guest had a fancy for particular articles of furniture, there was a dealer who had bought at a high price the privilege of supplying them at a high price.

The king gave his guests an excellent table; nay, a luxurious one. Marmontel's treatment, so amusingly described in his Memoirs, was that of many prisoners during the last century of the Bastille's reign. It was cold when Marmontel entered: the valets of the château made him a blazing fire and brought him plenty of wood. He objected to the mattresses: they were changed. A very good Friday dinner was served, with a bottle of tolerable wine, and, after he had eaten it, he was informed that it was meant for his servant. His own dinner followed: "Pyramids of new dishes, fine linen, beautiful porcelain, silver spoon and fork, an excellent soup, a slice of juicy beef, the leg of a broiled capon swimming in its gravy, a little dish of fried artichokes, one of spinach, a very fine pear, some grapes, a bottle of old Burgundy, and some of the best Mocha coffee." His servant, on seeing this banquet, said, "Monsieur, as you have just eaten my dinner, allow me in my turn to eat yours." "It is but just," replied his master, and the valet entered upon the work.

We may conclude, therefore, that Arouet did not have to

[1] Archives de la Bastille. Par François Ravaisson, Introduction, page xv. Paris. 1866.

wait long for his breakfast on the morning of his arrest, and that he had on that day, and every day, whatever was requisite for his bodily comfort. Indeed, we know that he dined sometimes with the governor. Almost every literary man of note who lived in the reign of Louis XV. was at least once a prisoner in the Bastille, and they agree in describing it as the least painful of prisons. There were but forty-two rooms in the structure, and many of them were usually vacant. There was much familiar intercourse between the prisoners and the officers of the château, and most of the prisoners, as it seems, received visitors in their rooms, and were allowed to keep a private store of wine and dainties for the entertainment of guests. They could send out for books, published with permission. There was a billiard-room, a bowling-alley, and a large court-yard for exercise and conversation, to all of which most of the prisoners had some daily access. Persons accused of serious crime, or who had given offense to a favorite or a mistress, were treated with more severity; were compelled to take their exercise alone, under the eye of a sentinel; were confined to their rooms, and could not receive visitors. For contumacious or disorderly inmates there were dungeons, damp and dark, at the bottom of each of the eight towers; but these were seldom used, and never except for short periods. The form of a *lettre de cachet* was in harmony with the mild regimen of the château. A person of rank was invited thus to the king's hospitality:

"My Cousin: As I am by no means satisfied with your conduct, I send you this letter to inform you of my intention, which is that, as soon as you receive this, you shall proceed to my château of the Bastille, there to remain till you have my further orders. On which, my cousin, I pray God to have you in his holy keeping."

M. Delort, among the papers discovered by him in "grocers' shops and second-hand bookstores," found what appears to be the original entry on the secret books of the Bastille of Arouet's arrest and its cause: —

"François-Marie Arouet, without profession, son of the Sieur Arouet, payer of the Chamber of Accounts, entered the Bastille May 17, 1717, accused of having composed some pieces of poetry and insolent verses against Monsieur the Regent and Madame the Duchess of

Berri; among others a piece which has for inscription 'Puero Regnante.' Accused also of having said that, since he could not revenge himself upon Monsieur the Duke of Orleans in a certain way, he would not spare him in his satires; upon which, some one having asked him what His Royal Highness had done to him, he rose in a rage, and replied, 'What! You do not know what that B. has done to me? He exiled me because I made the public see that his Messalina of a daughter was no better than she should be.' Signed, M. d'Argenson; Deschamps, clerk; Ysabeau, commissioner; Basin, exempt of the short robe."[1]

The bird is literally caged at last. His cage is of eight stone sides and a vaulted roof, furnished with a plain table, two rush-bottomed chairs, and a narrow bed. His family, as we are told by Duvernet, was in desolation.

"I foresaw clearly enough," cried his much-enduring father, "that his idleness would lead to some disgrace. Why did he not go into a profession?"

His Jansenist of a brother probably added a hearty served-him-right to his father's I-told-you-so. The old Marquis de Dangeau made another entry in his diary concerning this young man: "Arouet has been put into the Bastille. He is a young poet accused of writing very imprudent verses. He was exiled some months ago. He seems incorrigible." St. Simon apologizes to himself for recording so trivial a circumstance: "I should not mention here that Arouet was put into the Bastille for writing some most audacious verses, but for the celebrity which his poems, his adventures, and the caprice of the public have given him since. He is the son of my father's notary, whom I have often seen bringing papers to sign. He could never do anything with that libertine son of his, whose very libertinage made his fortune at last under the name of Voltaire, which he assumed to hide his own." Thus Polonius upon this plebeian Laertes.

Meanwhile, Laertes, as usual with him in all circumstances, was making himself as comfortable as possible. He was arrested on Saturday morning. On Thursday following we find him signing a receipt for certain articles needful to complete the equipment of a young gentleman and scholar, namely, "two volumes of Homer, Latin-Greek, two India handkerchiefs, a

[1] 2 Histoire de la Détention des Philosophes, 24.

little cap, two cravats, a night-cap, a small bottle of essence of cloves." Other effects had doubtless preceded this small convoy, and he could send for more if the articles were not prohibited. It is not certain that he was the sole occupant of his room, for others of the Duchess du Maine's partisans were arrested about the same time, and the château may have been overfull. Be that as it may, there *he* was, with his Homer, his night-cap, and his small bottle of essence of cloves, a prisoner in one of the massive towers of the old Bastille, with a deep slit for a window, through which neither earth nor sky could be seen.

CHAPTER XIII.

ELEVEN MONTHS A PRISONER.

Was he, as tradition reports, denied pen, ink, and paper in the Bastille? We have no letter of his written in that royal château, nor any other composition certainly known to have been put on paper there. At first, and perhaps for some weeks, he may have had no writing materials, the improper use of which was the offense charged against him. Diderot was refused them in later years; but he made a passable ink by scraping slate into wine, using a broken wine-glass as an inkstand, cutting his quill tooth-picks into pens, and writing on blank pages, as well as between the lines of wide-printed books. What a Diderot did an Arouet could do. He probably wrote in the Bastille; and probably enjoyed, during the latter part of his time, tolerable facilities both for study and composition.

When first he found himself immured in his eight-sided room, all the brightness of the world shut out, he threw himself (as Duvernet reports from the lips of Thieriot) upon his epic poem, "La Henriade," tumultuously planned at the more agreeable château of Saint-Ange. He began to compose in his mind, without waiting for pen and paper, and soon became, as usual with him, wholly possessed by his subject. Duvernet declares that the second canto, in which Henry of Navarre relates to Queen Elizabeth of England the Massacres of St. Bartholomew, came to the captive in a dream, perfect and entire, just as it now stands in the work, — the only canto which he never altered nor corrected. Honest Wagnière, his last amanuensis, asserts the same thing: "He told me that he composed the second canto of 'La Henriade' in his sleep, that he retained it in his memory, and never found anything to change in it."[1]

[1] 1 Mémoires sur Voltaire, par Longchamp et Wagnière, page 22.

Frederic of Prussia probably heard the poet relate something similar, but in the funeral oration which he pronounced upon Voltaire he does not repeat the marvel. "Could you, gentlemen," said the king, "have imagined that it was at the Bastille that our young bard composed the first two books of his 'Henriade'? Though strange, this is true. His prison became his Parnassus, to which the Muses resorted. It is equally true that the second book is now what it appeared in this first copy. Not having paper or ink, he learned the verses by rote, and retained them in his memory." [1]

Many writers have had similar experiences, and will therefore be able to believe a portion of this prodigy. In the early days of his incarceration, intensely absorbed in the attempt to go on with his poem without the means of writing, his health at low tide and his rest imperfect, he may have really dreamed out the narrative of St. Bartholomew, — a story, as he well says, which makes "the pen drop from the hand."

Some substitute for pen and ink coming, then, to alleviate the tedium of his days, the eleven months that he passed within the walls of this old fortress were not the least happy of his life, and were among the most profitable. How incomplete and misleading his education hitherto! This long seclusion gave him time to reflect, as well as labor. He discerned, as he afterwards said, that in France a man is born either hammer or anvil. Basking in the smiles of a Duchess du Maine, or sitting down to a supper of princes, he may have been weak enough to fancy himself hammer; but, pacing his stone octagonal in the Bastille, it was but too evident that he was nothing but anvil. If he hardened himself to bear inevitable blows, it was not his intention to remain anvil any longer than he must. "I patiently endured," he wrote, a year or two later, "the rigor of an unjust imprisonment; but I knew how to draw from my misfortune some advantage: I learned to harden myself against adversity, and I found in myself a fortitude not to be expected from the lightness and the errors of my youth." [2]

[1] 13 Posthumous Works of Frederic II., King of Prussia, page 492. London 789.

[2] Epître à M. de Genonville. 17 Œuvres de Voltaire, 49.

His chief gain was intellectual. Besides working upon the poem with all his own fiery ardor, he appears to have read and considered some important books, and he may have met in the château men of more mature character than himself. In his burlesque romance, "L'Ingénu," he consigns the hero to the Bastille, and gives him an experience there which may have been drawn in part from his own recollections. L'Ingénu is a young Frenchman reared among the Hurons of Lake Ontario, who comes to France at maturity, ignorant of the usages of civilization, and wholly "unformed." In the Bastille he meets a thoughtful and learned Jansenist, with whom he daily converses upon the highest themes. "The old man knew much, and the young man wished to learn much." He studied geometry with passion, read works upon physical science, such as there were then in France, and took up Malebranche's treatise upon the "Search after Truth," a work which suggested much that Voltaire applied. "What!" exclaims the Huron, "we are deceived to such a point by our imagination and our senses!" But when the young man had finished the work, he concluded that it was easier to destroy than to construct, and that Malebranche had torn down with his reason, and built up with his imagination and his prejudices. At last, the aged Jansenist asks him what he thinks of the soul, and of the great question of grace and free-will which had tormented France so long. The young man from Lake Ontario answered this question precisely as Voltaire always answered it: —

"I think nothing. If I have a thought upon it, it is that we are under the power of the Eternal Being, as the stars are, and the elements; and that he works by general laws, and not by particular views."

Then they read history together, which saddened him; for it was but a record of mingled crime and misery. And yet the spectacle of mighty Rome, "conqueror and lawgiver for seven hundred years, through her enthusiasm for liberty and glory," absorbed and fired his soul. They ran through the dark and bloody history of the church, not failing to note the words of Justinian: "Truth shines by its own light; human minds are not enlightened by the flames of the fagot." The young man becomes the teacher, and the old Jansenist, in the

presence of the sublime truths of science and the sorrowful facts of history, discerns, at length, the puerility of all sectarian controversies. Literature, poetry, drama, art, — all passed in review before them; and as the days, the weeks, the months, rolled on, the young man found the Bastille almost a happy abode.

Something of this happened to our captive. He increased his knowledge; he exercised his powers; he gathered himself for new attempts; and during many long days and silent nights he repeated his canto of St. Bartholomew. Nothing, it seems, could occur to this young man which did not, in some way, deepen his sense of the baleful effect of intolerance.

> "Religion, raging with inhuman zeal,
> Arms every hand, and points the fatal steel.
> To me, however, it will least belong
> To prove the Roman or Genevan wrong.
> Whatever names divine the parties claim,
> In craft and fury they are both the same."[1]

He was, nevertheless, in the Bastille, with a fine tragedy ready for presentation, and a literary career dependent upon its success. His friends outside were not idle. Le Brun, the author of the "I-have-seens," was found, and he, in the presence of a cabinet minister, and "with tears of contrition in his eyes," confessed himself the author of that harmless work. The captive himself lent a helping hand by composing a comic poem upon his arrest, which was well calculated to propitiate a regent who made light of the usages of the church. The Saturday of his arrest happened to be the day of Pentecost, on which the Roman Catholic church celebrates the "descent of the Holy Ghost upon the Apostles." He used this circumstance with an audacity that was calculated to make the regent, the grand prior, and both their supper-tables shake with laughter, and Jansenists shiver with affright. He makes his valet, who had come home drunk the evening before, cry out, on hearing the noise on the stairs of the approaching band, —

"Master! The Holy Ghost is out there! It is he, and no mistake, for I have read in my book that he comes into people's houses with a thundering racket!"

[1] La Henriade, canto ii.

Roused from sleep, the master sees at the foot of his bed, 'not a pigeon nor a dove, the Holy Spirit's tender and faithful bird, but twenty crows, ravenous for their prey." The whole poem is in this taste. It calls to mind the light audacities by which Byron, a century later, rescued cakes and ale from the ban of virtuous Southey.

These measures, in the spring of 1718, promised to be successful, and the captive poet had hopes of looking again upon the sky and the gardens of the Palais-Royal. It was at this time that he determined to make an alteration in his name, by appending to it, after the fashion of his country, a name appertaining to the family of his mother. He had not succeeded well with plain Arouet, and he would henceforth court fortune as Arouet de Voltaire. Arouet was then, apparently, pronounced as though it were written Arroi, an anomaly which caused him to be confounded sometimes with a poet named Roi, now forgotten, but then notorious and odious for low, satirical verse. Much ingenuity has been expended upon the derivation of the word Voltaire. A writer in "Le Derby," a French sporting paper, has the honor of settling this unimportant controversy. While investigating, in 1869, the pedigree of a French horse, he came upon the records of a family named Voltaire, and the family proved to be ancestors of our prisoner's mother.[1] The gentle parent, therefore, who gave him his talent, supplied him also with the name by which that talent became known.

Nothing is less unusual in France than such changes as these. Molière himself dropped the paternal name of Poquelin; and really it is much to be desired that when a man enters upon the work of immortalizing his name he would be considerate enough to provide himself with a name fit to be immortalized, one which posterity will take pleasure in pronouncing. Our poet did not formally drop the name of his family. He entered the Bastille, May 16, 1717, François-Marie Arouet; he came out of the Bastille, April 11, 1718, Arouet de Voltaire. The Arouet, however, soon wore off, and it finally appeared only in legal documents.

Prisoners released from the Bastille were ordered into exile. This prisoner was "relegated to the village of Châtenay, near

[1] Pall Mall Budget, February 26, 1869.

Sceaux, where his father, who has a country-house in the village, offers to retain him." To Châtenay, accordingly, he was driven on leaving the château of the Bastille, and there he remained. It was not his intention to take up his abode at that agreeable sojourn. When he had been at his father's house four days, he wrote to the lieutenant of police, thanking him for having procured his release, adding, "I think I have profited by my misfortunes, and I venture to assure you that I am as much indebted to His Royal Highness for my imprisonment as for my liberation. I have committed many faults; but I beg you, sir, to assure His Royal Highness that I am neither such a knave nor such a fool as ever to have used my pen against him. I have never spoken of that prince but to express my admiration for his genius."

To the Count de Maurepas, minister of the regent, May 2d, two weeks later: "I do not ask you to shorten the period of my exile, nor for permission to pass one hour in Paris. The only favor I solicit is that you will be so good as to assure His Royal Highness that I am as much obliged to him for my imprisonment as for my liberty, and that, as I have profited by the one, I shall never abuse the other. All appearances being against me, I have had no reason to complain of the regent's justice, and all my life I shall praise his clemency. I can assure you, as if I had to answer for it with my head, that . . . I have never even seen the abominable inscription attributed to me, and had not the least share in composing any of the songs against the court."

To Count de Maurepas he wrote again, after an interval of only four days, but in a very different strain. He seems to have discovered, meanwhile, the "perfidy" of the spies who had denounced him, and to have obtained proofs of the same. He now implores, with all the fervor of passionate desire, permission to go to Paris for two hours, that he might speak to the count for a moment, and "throw himself at the feet of His Royal Highness." Permission was granted, and he came. He had an interview with the regent, and, as it appears, made a very favorable impression upon him.

"Be prudent," the prince is reported to have said to him, "and I will take care of you."

The reply of the poet is one of his famous sallies: "I

should find it very good if his majesty should be pleased henceforth to charge himself with my board, but I beg your Royal Highness not to trouble yourself farther with my lodging."

This reply ought to have made a livelier impression than it did upon a good-natured regent. But this prince, self-indulgent Bourbon as he was, kept business and pleasure distinct. He never told a state secret to a mistress, and he did not allow his witty exile to live in Paris until six months after his release from the Bastille. There was, indeed, little obstacle to his occasional visits, but it was not until the 12th of October, 1718, that permission was formally accorded to "le Sieur Arouet de Voltaire to come to Paris whenever he pleases."

CHAPTER XIV.

"ŒDIPE" PERFORMED.

His tragedy is at last in rehearsal at the Théâtre-Français. That "Œdipe," which he had begun five years before, and read so often to princesses, comrades, and critics, is announced for production in November, and the poet is established at Paris none too soon.

He had written this play in the spirit of an artist formed and necessitated to succeed. It was at one of the noble and beautiful *fêtes* of the period, given to the Duchess du Maine, that he conceived the idea of writing a tragedy upon this oft-used theme. The duchess on that occasion assisted at a representation of the "Iphigenia" of Euripides, translated into French at her request by M. de Malézieu, herself playing the part of Iphigenia. The young poet was deeply moved by the austere majesty of the play.

"At that time [as he afterwards told the duchess] I had no familiarity with our French drama, and it did not enter my mind that an affair of love could be mingled with that tragic subject. I yielded myself to the manners and customs of Greece so much the more easily from scarcely knowing any others, and I admired the antique in all its noble simplicity. This performance it was which gave me the first idea of composing my tragedy, before I had even read the 'Œdipe' of Corneille. I began with translating, by way of experiment, the famous scene of Sophocles, which contains the mutual confidence of Jocaste and Œdipe. I read it to some of my friends who went often to the theatre, and to some actors. They assured me that the scene could never succeed in France; they urged me to read Corneille, who had carefully avoided it; and they all agreed that if I did not follow his example, and put a love affair into 'Œdipe,' the actors themselves would not accept my work. I then read the 'Œdipe' of Corneille, which, without being regarded as equal in merit to his 'Cinna' and 'Polyeucte,' had then much reputation. I confess that the play revolted me from one end to the other; but it was nec-

essary to yield to precedent and to bad usage. In the midst of the terror of that masterpiece of antiquity I introduced, not an affair of love, — that idea appeared to me too shocking, — but at least the recollection of an extinct passion." [1]

And when he had written his play his troubles were far from being at an end. Among the papers of Father Porée, his Latin master at the Collège Louis-le-Grand, was found after his death a letter of 1729, in which the young dramatist mentioned some of the other obstacles he had been obliged to encounter.

"Young as I was [wrote the pupil to the master], I composed 'Œdipe' very nearly as you see it to-day. I was full of the reading of the ancients and of your lessons, and, knowing very imperfectly the Paris stage, I worked almost as if I had been at Athens. I consulted M. Dacier,[2] who was of that country. He advised me to put a chorus into all the scenes, after the manner of the Greeks; which was like advising me to walk in Paris wearing Plato's robe. It was all I could do to induce the actors of Paris to perform the chorus that appeared only three or four times in the play; and I had even more trouble to get them to accept a piece devoid of love. The actresses laughed at me when they saw that there was no part for the amorous lady, and they found the scene of the twofold confidence between Œdipe and Jocaste (drawn in part from Sophocles) entirely insipid. In a word, the actors, who were then coxcombs and great lords, refused to play the piece. I was extremely young. I believed they were right. To please them I spoiled my tragedy by mingling sentiments of tenderness with a legend to which they were so unsuited. When they saw a little love in the play they were less dissatisfied with me, but they would not tolerate in the least that grand scene between Jocaste and Œdipe; they ridiculed, at once, Sophocles and his imitator. I held my ground; I gave my reasons; I set some of my friends at work; and, after all, it was only through the influence of important persons that I induced them to play 'Œdipe.' There was an actor named Quinault who said openly that, to punish me for my obstinacy, the piece ought to be played just as it was, including that bad fourth act taken from the Greek. Besides, they regarded me as a presumptuous person to dare treat a subject with which Pierre Corneille had succeeded so well. Corneille's 'Œdipe' was at that time considered an excellent work. I deemed

[1] 6 Œuvres de Voltaire, 156.

[2] The celebrated translator.

it a very poor work, and I dared not say so. I did not say it till ten years had passed, when the public was of my opinion." [1]

But now, owing to the good word of the Prince de Conti and other appreciators of the poet, all difficulties were overcome, and the polite world of Paris was expectant of the sensation of a new play by a new poet: a poet just out of the Bastille; a play of which great things were said and mischievous things were whispered in high circles.

Voltaire himself tells us what a first night then was to the graceful idlers of Paris, — thirty thousand persons, as he computed, in a population of half a million. Cabals became active for and against the new play. There were intrigues for the possession of a box, and by noon of the great day the theatre was filled with valets keeping seats for their masters. The piece was judged before the curtain rose on the first act. Women argued with women; dandies with dandies; cliques with cliques. The cafés filled early in the day with people disputing the merits of a production which none of them had seen. Crowds gathered in the street waiting for admission to the parquette. Bets were made, and the fate of the piece was foretold by a throw of the dice. The actors trembled, the author also; and all his friends were anxious and astir.[2]

On some occasions, when partisans were unusually excited, each spectator was asked, as he entered the parquette, "Do you come to hiss?" "Yes." "Then sit over there." But if he answered, "I come to applaud," he was directed to the other side. Thus the two belligerent bodies were massed for more effective action.[3]

The hour has come. It is Friday, November 18, 1718. The house is crowded; the candles are snuffed; the ladies glitter with jewelry. At that time, and as late as 1759, spectators were allowed both to stand and sit upon the stage; nay, to lounge about, converse, and even smoke. The same dread of the audience which makes our performers nightly submit to the imposition of encores, and destroy illusion by acknowledging applause, preserved this abuse for a century, against the rebuke and ridicule of every lover of the dramatic

[1] Voltaire to Père Porée. January 7, 1729.
[2] Voltaire to his niece, Madame Denis. March 3, 1752.
[3] 16 Œuvres de Voltaire, 268.

art. Four rows of benches on each side, one behind and above the other, had now replaced the primeval stools, and formed upon the stage a kind of amphitheatre, which was enclosed by a gilded railing. On important nights like this there would also be a row of seats outside the railing, as well as a solid mass of spectators standing at the back of the stage, through which the actors forced their way to the front.[1] Garrick in England, Voltaire in France, forty years later, cleared the stage of this absurd incumbrance, to the great relief and joy of all concerned.

Imagine, then, an interior not very large, not too brilliantly lighted, crowded with people, all dressed in the showy colors and picturesque garments of the time, with a narrow strip of stage in the midst thereof, upon which the terrible legend of Œdipus is to be presented, set to the music of French rhyme. The audience was homogeneous, at least. There were no "groundlings" to be conciliated, nor "gods" to be kept quiet; for, at that period, the industrial people of Paris only went to the theatre on certain festive days, when the king paid for all. Dealers in lemonade moved about among the spectators. The rosy regent may have been there with a mistress conspicuous at his side, and the duchess, his wife, may have also been present in her own box, not far off. A chronicler of the time mentions seeing at this very theatre, in the Palais Royal, in 1720, the regent, with *one* of his mistresses seated next to him, and on the other side of the house, "Monsieur le Duc," the prince next in rank to the regent, also with his mistress sitting beside him.[2]

A more pleasing tradition is that Maître Arouet, the much-enduring father of the poet, was among the spectators. The young man himself was behind the scenes, suffering the pangs which all authors know, and, as it seems, affecting the gayety that young authors sometimes affect on such occasions.

The bell rings to notify the audience that the curtain is about to rise, and that all must leave the theatre who do not intend to witness the performance. To those who go out, if any do, their money is returned. This strange custom accommodated people who only came to see the assembly and

[1] 7 Journal de Barbier, 160.
[2] 1 Journal de Marais, 495.

converse with acquaintances. On first nights, however, there were few such visitors, or none. The curtain rises. The Prince of Eubœa enters, followed by his convenient friend, Dimas, both dressed in the mode of Paris, *anno* 1718, with swords at their sides, precisely similar to those worn by every gentleman in the audience. The first couplet gives the key-note : —

> " Philoctète, est-ce vous ? Quel coup affreux du sort
> Dans ces lieux empestés vous fait chercher la mort ? "

Among the last things reached by a student of the beautiful language and noble literature of France is an appreciation of the rhymed tragedies of the elder dramatists, Corneille, Racine, Voltaire. We have, first of all, to forget Shakespeare, and all Shakespearean methods. We have also to pass through a process similar to that by which a country youth learns first to endure, then forgive, and, finally, love the Italian opera; or that process by which a performer of the " Battle of Prague " on the piano comes to dote upon a Wagnerian opera, — a beautiful legend, gliding slowly by to the sound of heavenly music.

A French tragedy of the old style is a spoken opera, a series of stately, rhymed dialogue, relieved by little action, burdened with much narration ; the decisive events being usually told, not exhibited. There is scarcely any attempt at naturalness or verisimilitude; there are commonly no forms of salutation or farewell ; and there is nothing approaching a jest. The first words are fraught with the agony of the theme ; the story moves on with little interruption ; and there are few passages of an independent beauty, such as " Mercy is twice blessed," and the suicide soliloquy in " Hamlet." The villains are conscious villains, and expatiate upon their villainy with a simplicity that amuses ; but the good are wholly and romantically good. In Shakespeare there is always the powerful legend, but there is also a varied exhibition of human character. In the old French tragedy the legend dominates, fate is supreme, and the characters are little individualized. Such, however, is the charm of literary art, that these tragedies retain a place in the world's literature, and will perhaps be read, performed, and loved after most of the subsequent drama of France has faded forever from the memories of men.

This "Œdipe" of Voltaire's held and thrilled the audience. With much of the excellence of his two great predecessors, he possessed an effectiveness all his own, and he provided his actors with an extraordinary number of "points," which gave them easy opportunities of winning applause.

All plays that play well, from "Hamlet" to "The Hunchback," have one quality in common, and only one, — they afford the actors good chances to display their talents. People go to the theatre to see acting, and the dramatist's part in the enterprise is to provide opportunity for acting. Voltaire performed this duty, and did not disdain to insert some passages of the kind which are now styled local hits. Since the play turned upon incest and parricide, the enemies of the regent came to the theatre expecting allusion to the infernal imaginings of base minds then current in Paris. They pretended to find what they sought; and the play contained allusion enough of other kinds, intended by the author.

Thunders of applause followed the delivery of a powerful passage in the first scene, which reminded auditors of their beloved little king, eight years old, and of the fine example set him by his elders: "The friendship of a great man is a boon from the gods. What had I been without *him?* Nothing but a king's son! Nothing but a common prince! I should have been, perhaps, the slave of my senses, of which he has rendered me the master!"

The friends and the enemies of the regent, the friends and the enemies of the Duchess du Maine, the friends and the enemies of the king's tutor, Fleury, were all equally *obliged* to applaud this passage. In the same act there were some lines that appealed to the people who were relenting toward the memory of the late king, and remembered with shame how his funeral rites had been slighted: "Kings while they live are obeyed, even in things belonging to the other world. Adored by their subjects, they are gods themselves. But after their death, what are they in your eyes? You extinguish the incense that you burned to them; and, as the human soul is controlled by interest, the virtue which is no more is instantly forgotten. The blood of your king rises up against you!"

And again, when Jocaste exclaims, "Incest and parri-

cide!" the ill-disposed could not but think of a prince popularly accused of both. For the sect of the unbelievers, already numerous and zealous, there were two titbits, one of which was vehemently applauded: "Our priests are not what the foolish people think them; our credulity makes all their science."

There was a point, too, in the fourth act, which recalled the parade adopted during the last two reigns whenever the king appeared to the public, — "a hedge of soldiers" lining both sides of the street. The reduction of the twelve thousand royal guards was a topic of the day.

ŒDIPE. — "When Laius undertook that fatal journey, had he any guards, any soldiers, with him?"

JOCASTE. — "I have told you already that one man alone went with him."

ŒDIPE. — "Only one man?"

JOCASTE. — "That king, greater than his rank, disdained, like you, a wearisome pomp. Before *his* chariot the gorgeous rampart of a numerous battalion was never seen marching. In the midst of subjects submissive to his authority, as he was without fear, he went his way without defense. By the love of his people he believed himself guarded."

Such passages as these, though they could not have saved a dull play, added greatly to the success of this truly powerful one. The fourth act profoundly moved the audience, and the interest was well sustained to the end. The chorus, sparingly used, had a happy effect, and gave variety as well as dignity to the performance.

Tradition reports that in the last scene, when the high priest and the chorus have the stage almost to themselves, the author, hilarious with his triumph, seized the pontiff's train, and came in view of the spectators still bearing it. Madame de Villars, who saw this extravagance, asked, "Who is that young man trying to damn the play?" Upon learning that it was the author, she conceived a high opinion of his magnanimity, and had him presented to her. The acquaintance thus formed lasted long, and had important consequences.

Maître Arouet, so runs the tale, did not listen in silent rapture to the fervid verse of his troublesome offspring. "Ah,

the rogue! Ah, the rogue!" he is said to have muttered from time to time during the performance, and ended by crying outright at the fourth act.

One brilliant anecdote of this great night the author himself recorded, fifty-five years after, in a letter to La Harpe. His grand lady friends kept telling him, during the evening, how superior his piece was to that of Corneille on the same subject. The young poet, always loyal to his great forerunners, always a modest author, contrived, by a happy quotation from Corneille himself, to accept the compliment, and, at the same time, pay becoming homage to the father of French tragedy. He quoted the lines from Corneille's "Pompey" which the victorious Cæsar pronounces over Pompey's dead body: "Remains of a demi-god, never can I equal thy great name, thy conqueror though I am!"

> "Restes d'un demi-dieu, dont jamais je ne puis
> Egaler le grand nom, tout vanqueur que j'en suis."
>
> (Acte V., Scène 1.)

It was a pretty story to run from box to box, from drawing-room to drawing-room, from château to château, in those first weeks of a new-born fame. Subsequent representations confirmed and enhanced the triumph of the opening night. Both the partisans of the regent and those of the Duke du Maine had an equal interest in promoting the run of the play. According to the biographer of the regent, every point was "applied and applauded" by both parties alike, while the author affected not to perceive the existence of the strife, and induced the regent to attend a performance with his daughter, the Duchess of Berri. That princess, he adds, came "five nights in succession to see the play, as if to brave public opinion." People spoke of the Regent-Œdipe, and of his daughter as Berri-Jocaste.[1]

The good-natured prince held his ground, and heaped honors upon the fortunate author. He presented him, in the king's name, with a massive gold medal. The original record of this transaction exists in the great Library of Paris: "December 6, 1718. Given to the Sieur Arouet a gold medal, representing on one side the King, and on the other Monseigneur the Duc d'Orleans, Regent, amounting to the sum of six hun-

[1] Philippe d'Orleans, par M. Capefigue, page 394.

dred and seventy-five livres ten sous."[1] The duke publicly conversed with the author at the next opera ball. The subject of their conversation was Rabelais, whose works the regent extravagantly praised, which caused the young man to think ill of the prince's taste. "I had then," Voltaire says, "a sovereign contempt for Rabelais," from which he long afterwards recovered, on learning more of the times and circumstances in which Rabelais wrote.[2] More than all this, the regent permitted the tragedy to be performed in the Tuileries for the amusement of the boy-king. This last was the crowning triumph of the poet. The Marquis de Dangeau, who disposes of great affairs of state in four lines, devotes to this event a considerable paragraph: —

"Saturday, January 11, 1719, the drama of 'Œdipe' was played at the king's palace, when Madame de Berri sat beside him in grand toilette, and all the ladies who were in the king's view were in grand toilette also. But those who were upon the steps behind the king, and in the galleries, were in their usual clothes. The piece was much applauded. The ambassadors of the emperor, those of the king of Portugal and the king of Sardinia, were present. Although the room was small, there was a large company, and very great order was observed."

The play was performed forty-five successive nights, — a run not previously equaled on the French stage; and it remains to this day a stock piece, played whenever there is an actress capable of personating the ill-starred heroine. The author, as he tells us, was present every night, watching both the performance and the audience, and learning something of his art from both. "Each representation of my 'Œdipe' was for me a severe study, in which I gathered the approval and the censures of the public, and studied the public taste to form my own." Yet he would not always admit the correctness of the public verdict; he remained dissatisfied with the first scene of the fourth act, though it was the one that nightly produced the greatest effect.

The poet pushed and utilized this first success in every possible way and to the uttermost degree. In a few days

[1] Jeunesse de Voltaire, page 158.

[2] Voltaire to Madame du Deffand, October 13, 1759.

after the opening night he was ready with an edition of the tragedy, which bore a most flattering "approbation" from the official censor, the poet La Motte. "The public, at the representation of this piece," said La Motte, "promised itself a worthy successor of Corneille and Racine; and I believe that at the reading of it it will abate nothing of its hopes." With audacious tact, the author dedicated the play to the Duchess of Orleans, the regent's mother, telling her in his epistle that, if the usage of dedicating literary works to the best judges of them were not already established, it would begin with Her Royal Highness, the protectress of the fine arts, the example and the delight of France. He prefixed to the play several letters, gossipy and critical, in which he discoursed upon his late mishap in being suspected of having written a parcel of stuff entitled "I Have Seen;" and he let the public know that His Royal Highness had deigned to acknowledge his innocence and to compensate him for his detention. He descanted at some length upon the "Œdipe" of Sophocles, upon that of Corneille, and upon his own, comparing their faults and merits with interesting candor; conceding the general superiority of his two predecessors, but not concealing his just opinion that, in the matter of "Œdipe," it was M. Arouet de Voltaire who had treated the legend most suitably to modern tastes. A swarm of pamphlets fluttered from the press in response, some defending the Greek poet, others the French. The Prince de Conti wrote a poem in honor of the new play and poet, in which he said that the new treatment of the old theme was such as to make people think either that Racine had come back from Hades, or else that Corneille in Hades had corrected his style. "Monseigneur," said Voltaire to the prince, "you will be a great poet; I must get the king to give you a pension," — a good example of the "tone of ease" which he took with the lords of the earth. He also addressed a poem to the prince, which contains something more and better than the usual eulogium. He sent a copy of his play to George I. of England, with a swelling sonnet addressed to the monarch, and another copy to the Duke and Duchess of Lorraine (the lady being a sister of the regent), with a modest stanza.

The author's share of the profits of the performance appears

to have been about four thousand francs, to which must perhaps be added a thousand crowns, said to have been given him by the Duke of Orleans, and part of the proceeds of the sale of copies. He was a capitalist! We begin to find intimations in his correspondence that he possessed bonds and shares. "A good part of my property is in the India Company," he writes in these weeks to a lady. All the world was buying shares in one or the other of the schemes of John Law. Making money was coming into fashion, and it was a very good time for a notary's son to go upon the street with a few thousand francs of good money in his pocket. He had something better even than money, namely, a permit, a privilege or monopoly of some kind from the regent, upon which a money-making enterprise was founded, and in speaking of which he takes the tone of the director.[1]

[1] 1 Lettres Inédites de Voltaire, 2, 3.

CHAPTER XV.

FROM CHÂTEAU TO CHÂTEAU.

THOSE were happy days. There are few keener delights enjoyed by mortals than a genuine literary success, whether the motive of the author be public or personal. I have heard a poet of our own time say, apropos of Dante's "Paradise," that he could imagine no bliss of disembodied spirits greater than that of publishing, every three or four years, a little volume which should pervade the civilized world, and cause that world to give back to the author a glance of sympathetic recognition. A dramatic triumph is, perhaps, the most thrilling of all the forms of literary glory, since it is one which the author can himself nightly witness and vividly feel.

Voltaire at this time had two comrades to share and increase his happiness, with whom he had many a gay ride into the country, and many a merry supper in town after the play. One of these was a young man named De Génonville, to whose "manes" he afterwards addressed the well-known Epistle. The other was Mademoiselle de Livri, whom he had met at the château of the Duke of Sully, where she served as *femme de chambre* to the duchess, and played comedy parts in the little theatre of the château. Voltaire, struck with her talent, and perhaps attracted by her personal charms, gave her lessons in the dramatic art, and promised to use his interest in procuring her a *début* upon the stage of Paris. The success of "Œdipe" now gave his recommendation so much weight that the young lady was in Paris in the spring of 1719, rehearsing the important part of Jocaste in the new tragedy, which was to be revived after Lent. Hence the gay rides and the merry suppers of the three inseparables — Voltaire, De Génonville, and "Égérie."

"You remember the time," Voltaire sings to the "manes" of his old friend, "when the amiable Égérie, in the beautiful

days of our life, heard our songs and shared our enthusiasms. We three loved one another. Reason, folly, love, the enchantment of the most tender errors, — all bound together our three hearts. How happy we were! Even that poverty of ours, sad companion of bright days, could not poison the current of our joy. Young, gay, content, without care, without forethought, limiting all our desires to the delights of the present moment, what need had we of a vain abundance? We had richer possessions: we had the pleasures." [1]

Such was his remembrance of those months, after ten years had rolled over his head. For a time, it seems, the poet was in love with his engaging pupil, and gave her his portrait, which has been preserved to this day. She came at last to prefer De Génonville; Voltaire also was drawn away by a more potent attraction; and these are, as we may conjecture, the "tender errors" of which the poet speaks. One of his own tender errors of that too brief period of joy was intrusting a leading part in high tragedy to a young girl from the country before she had learned to pronounce her native tongue in the Parisian manner. When "Œdipe" was revived after Lent, Mademoiselle de Livri appeared in the part of the Queen, and with the greater prestige from being represented by the scandal of the day as the *maîtresse* of the author. Her failure was complete and hopeless. Some provincial peculiarities of pronunciation provoked laughter, and she was so manifestly unequal to the part that, on the third night, it was resumed by the excellent actress who had originally performed it.

The author of the play was not long in discovering "the justice" of the public verdict; but on the fatal evening he was extremely indignant. Observing one of the actors, Poisson, joining in the general laughter, he assailed him with a volley of abusive words. At the end of the performance (so the gossip of the day reports), Poisson waited for him at the door of the theatre, and challenged him. The author declining the combat "against an actor," Poisson threatened to assault him with his cane, and the poet is said to have complained to the police, and caused the actor to be thrown into prison, from which he was released through Voltaire's own intercession. Malign gossip asserts that this intercession was itself a piece

[1] Épître aux Manes de M. de Génonville, 1729; 17 Œuvres de Voltaire, 82.

of histrionic performance. Mademoiselle de Livri resumed her comedy parts, and was heard of on the Paris stage no more. Her subsequent career in the world surpassed in startling surprises and splendid transformation scenes any comedy in which she ever performed. Meanwhile, exit Égérie, and the gay trio is dispersed, never to be merry together again.

Who has ever tasted dramatic success without courting the muse a second time? The poet had already fixed upon a theme for another tragedy, — Artemire, queen to Cassander, a king of the time of Alexander the Great. In the composition of "Œdipe," he had been aided by previous versions of the awful legend, and owed the supreme effect of the play in the fourth act to the genius of Sophocles. His purpose now was to produce a work which should be wholly his own, including the story, — a feat which a dramatist of his rank has rarely attempted. It was a tale of an innocent queen and an absent husband made jealous by false accusations, which he discovers to be false just after he has received his death wound. He began to compose this piece with his usual ardor, when he was once more exiled from Paris.

The regent continued to live in the self-indulgent manner described above, and the hostile faction continued, also, to intrigue and calumniate. Three short poems, called "The Philippics" (the regent's name was Philip), appeared in Paris in the spring of 1719, in which the worst scandals concerning the regent and his court were recounted in verse so melodious and effective that to this day "Les Philippiques" rank as part of the classic literature of France. They had such an immediate circulation all over the country that it seemed the effect of systematic exertion. The French are curiously susceptible to the charm of versification, and, in the dawn of freedom, there is a propensity to exaggerate the faults of rulers. These Philippics repeated the hackneyed insinuations with regard to the regent and his daughter, the Duchess of Berri, and distinctly accused him of a design to poison the boy-king, his nephew. This regent committed grievous faults; his daily life was shameful; but he was a fond father and uncle, and as incapable of the crimes imputed to him as any gentleman in Europe. A moralist might aver that he had done worse things than those of which he was accused,

but he had not done those. It was, perhaps, more injurious to France for him to live as he lived, and prepare for that boy the moral atmosphere which his example and policy did prepare for him, than to slay him outright, and seize his crown. But, in his own way, he loved the little king, and performed punctiliously every duty towards him which the moral feeling of that court demanded. These scandalous poems cut him to the heart. He heard of them some time before he saw them, and often asked to see them; but, as St. Simon records, no one dared show him compositions "which contained all that hell can vomit, both of false and true, expressed in the most beautiful verse." At length he demanded them with such urgency that St. Simon was obliged to obey, declaring, as he handed the sheet to the regent, that as for reading the poems he would never do it. The passage in which the Duke of St. Simon describes the scene that followed is one of the most famous in the memoirs of that age, and it may serve to show us what misery anonymous cowards often inflict when they assail with poniard pen the defenseless chief of a nation: —

"The regent then took the leaf and read it to himself, standing in the window of his little winter cabinet, where we were. He found it, as he read along, to be such as it was, for he stopped now and then to speak to me about it, without seeming to be much moved. But, all at once, I saw him change countenance, and turn toward me, tears in his eyes, and almost overcome. 'Ah,' he said, 'this is too much; this horror is stronger than I.' He was at the place where the scoundrel showed the Duke of Orleans designing to poison the king, and near accomplishing his crime. It is the passage in which the author redoubles his energy, his poetic fire, his invocations, the frightful and terrific beauties of his verse, hideous pictures, touching portraiture of youth, the king's innocence, the hopes he gave, his appeals to the nation to save a victim so precious from the murderer's barbarity; in a word, all that the literary art has of most delicate and most tender, of most powerful and most black, of most stately and most moving. I wished to avail myself of the mournful silence of the duke to take away that execrable paper, but could not succeed. He poured forth just complaints of a calumny so abominable; he uttered expressions of tenderness for the king; then he wished to finish the reading, which he again, and more than once, interrupted to speak of it to me. Never have I seen a man so penetrated, so deeply moved, so overwhelmed with an injustice so enormous and sustained.

For my part, I was beside myself. The most prejudiced persons, provided they were disinterested in their prejudice, if they had seen him then, would have yielded to the obvious certainty of his innocence and the horror of the crime in which he was plunged. I could scarcely recover from the shock, and I had all the trouble in the world to restore him a little."[1]

The author of those poems, La Grange-Chancel, a noted dramatist of the day, wrote them, as it seems, merely to avenge a private literary wrong, committed not by the regent, but by one of the regent's favorites. As he had previously published nothing equal to them in force or malignity, suspicion passed him over, and fell upon Voltaire, recently from the Bastille, and still a frequenter of disaffected circles. He had been much with Baron de Goërtz, minister and emissary of Charles XII., intriguer, sham financier, adventurer, whose schemes included the restoration of Stanislas to the throne of Poland, James II.'s return to England, and, perhaps, a change in the dynastic arrangements of Spain and France. In his "History of Charles XII.," Voltaire explains these designs in many pages, and gives the baron's character in one line: "What his master was at the head of an army, Goërtz was in the cabinet." Among his other bold projects, he had formed the design to capture the author of the new "Œdipe," and bear him off to grace the court of the king of Sweden, who, it was said at the time, "did not know what a poet was." The bullet that pierced the brain of the Swedish king, December 11, 1718, put an end to the projects of his minister; and, a few months after, the Swedes brought him to trial and cut off his head for the double crime of inflating their paper and debasing their coin. It was from the Baron Henri de Goërtz that Voltaire derived part of the information which enabled him, by and by, to write his "History of Charles XII." All was fish that came to the net of this young man, ever curious to know the more hidden causes of public events.

He was "suspect." The bullet just mentioned had the most surprising and remote effects. It shut up the Duchess du Maine and her court in the Bastille, and it was among the causes of Voltaire's receiving a polite official intimation in May, 1719, that he had better pass the fine season in the

[1] 16 St. Simon, 259, Paris, 1877

country. The public, not the regent, believed him to be the author of the "Philippiques;" he had been an open frequenter of the society of intriguers who surrounded the bed of the Duchess du Maine; he had been a comrade of the beheaded Goërtz. It was enough. A storm was heard one day crashing along the horizon, filling Paris with dust and noise. "The kingdom of heaven, *too*," said he, "must have fallen into regency;" and, with this light word to amuse the saloons he left behind him, he took his unfinished play and his unfinished poem with him, and spent the rest of the year in the provinces. "At present," he writes to the Marquise de Mimeure, "I am at Villars. I pass my life from château to château."

Villars was the country-house of the veteran marshal of Louis XIV.'s later wars, the Duke of Villars, a personage of great note and splendor during the regency. The new play of "Artemire" did not advance rapidly under the roof of this old soldier. Again our inquisitive author had daily access to one of the sources of history, and again a public man found in him a listener untiring and sympathetic. Many of the most effective anecdotes in Voltaire's "History of the Age of Louis XIV." are preceded by, "I have often heard the Marshal de Villars say," or, "The Marshal de Villars assured me;" and it was during this and subsequent summers, while going about among the châteaux of France, that he obtained and recorded those anecdotes. The veteran loved to fight his campaigns over again, quite as well as his guest loved to hear him do so.

But it was not this that retarded the new play. The Duchess de Villars, much younger than her husband, a handsome, luxurious woman, had accepted it as her vocation to disarm the jealousy arising from her husband's too rapid promotion, by being agreeable to all the world. It was she who had summoned Voltaire to her box on the opening night of his "Œdipe," and been gracious to him in the susceptible hour of his triumph. She was too agreeable to him. He was fascinated. He conceived for her "a grand passion," which for some months, as it appears, absorbed and confused his life, suspending even the power to labor, his usual resource in all times of trouble. She played with him, tradition reports, never returning his love, but permitting him to hope and lan-

guish. It cost him a long and severe struggle to conquer this passion, but he did conquer it, and found relief at last in resuming his work. He was accustomed to express contrition for his weakness on this occasion; not, indeed, for having made love to an old soldier's wife under that old soldier's own roof, but because a fruitless passion had caused him to lose so much time! He wrote to his friend, Madame de Mimeure, in the true tone of the disappointed and hopeless lover: —

"You make me feel that friendship is a thousand times more precious than love. It seems to me that I am not at all made for the passions. I find something ridiculous in *my* being in love, and I should find it more ridiculous in those who should be in love with me. It is all over. I renounce it for life."

He wrote, also, a very pretty, but very saucy epistle, in verse, to the object of his passion, complaining of her insensibility to his devotion. He concludes thus: "The Future, in reading this work, since it is made for you, will cherish its delineations. This author, readers will say, who painted so many charms, had for his share only some little suppers, where the guests drank very freely; but he deserved more." All of which was in accord with Ninon de Lenclos's maxim, that "love is a pastime, involving no moral obligation," — the falsest thing, perhaps, which words ever uttered.

From château to château. This expression describes his way of life for many years, — nay, for the greater part of his existence; for he was near sixty years of age before he was settled in a château of his own. From Villars he went to his old quarters at the house of the Duke of Sully; thence to Villars again; often to the magnificent abode of the Duke of Richelieu, filled with evidences of the profusion and taste of the great cardinal; going the round of the great houses; always, however, keeping rooms in Paris for himself and his old comrade, Thieriot; often writing to his Paris friends, both in prose and verse.

His enforced absence from Paris during the latter half of 1719 saved him from the danger of being drawn into the vortex of ruin resulting from the schemes of John Law, inventor of money-making, who brought upon frugal France the catastrophe of an inflated currency, one of the greatest

a nation can suffer. Law had been four years at work upon the finances of the country, and the result was eight months of delirium, — June, 1719, to February, 1720, — followed by a collapse more woful and lasting than any other country has since suffered from the practice of Law's methods.

Louis XIV. died in 1715, leaving behind him an empty treasury, a vast debt, and more than a thousand millions of depreciated paper, worth about twenty-seven per cent. of its nominal value. Law sold shares in his various schemes on these terms: one quarter of the price in coin; three quarters in the king's paper, *at its nominal value.* Frugal, cautious France hesitated; but Law was an advertiser of genius, fertile in expedients, unscrupulous; and, at last, the shares sold, and that great flabby volume of paper, held by princes, lackeys, servants, merchants, clerks, everybody, began to swell, and went on swelling, until it reached par, and, still rising, brought a premium, and people sold solid family plate to get the means of buying paper. Our poet knew not what to make of the reports that reached him from Paris. He had seen, as he tells us, this Scotchman become French by naturalization, from Protestant become Catholic, from adventurer to be lord of fine estates, from banker to be minister; he had seen him arrive at the Palais-Royal, "followed by dukes and peers, marshals of France and bishops;" and, now that he was absent from Paris, every post brought tidings more marvelous still.

"It is a fine thing, my dear friend [he wrote to his little De Génonville, from the château of Villars], to come into the country, while Plutus is turning every head in town. Have you really become all lunatics at Paris? I hear nothing but millions spoken of. They say that all who were well off are in misery, and that all the beggars swim in riches. Is it a reality? Is it a chimera? Has half the nation found the philosopher's stone in paper-mills? Is Law a god, a scoundrel, or a quack who poisons with the drug which he distributes to all the world? Are people content with imaginary wealth? It is a chaos which I cannot see through, and of which, I imagine, you understand nothing. For my part, I give myself up to no other chimeras than those of poetry."

A few months later, when the mania to "realize" had supplanted the mania to speculate, the true character of these

operations was revealed. One hundred thousand persons, it was computed, were ruined; business in France lay paralyzed; and moral harm was done, from which the world has suffered ever since. A new disease was generated by John Law, which occasionally rages in every land like an epidemic, the accursed itch of getting wealth by a rise in values, by "corners," and other similar devices. A memorial of that time is the city of New Orleans, founded in 1718 by Law's company, and named by him in honor of the regent. The Pitt diamond, that still glistens among the national jewels of France, where it is called "the Regent," is also a memento of John Law, who persuaded the virtuous Duke of St. Simon to recommend the regent to buy it for two millions of francs. With how little wisdom great kingdoms were governed! The regent, strange to say, objected to make this purchase, on the ground that the country was deep in debt and could scarcely pay its troops. Stranger to say, St. Simon, one of the few disinterested and irreproachable gentlemen about the court, was vehement for the purchase. He admitted that a large number of persons to whom the government was indebted were suffering for want of their money, and he praised the Duke of Orleans for sympathizing with them; but he maintained that the finances of "the greatest king in Europe" ought not to be managed like those of a private person. The honor of the crown must be considered, and an opportunity, which could not return, of acquiring a priceless gem that would "*efface*" the diamonds of all Europe ought not to be let slip. It would be a glory for the regency that would endure forever. The regent yielded; and, to his surprise, as well as ours, the public applauded the acquisition. The patriotic Duke of St. Simon, to his dying day, cherished it among his dearest recollections that it was he, and no other man, who had persuaded the Regent of France to buy (on credit) a diamond as large as a Queen Claude plum, nearly round, colorless, flawless, spotless, weighing nearly five hundred grains. He styles it "an illustrious purchase" (*une emplette illustre*).[1]

The Law mania was at an end in February, 1720, when Voltaire was allowed to remain at Paris to superintend the

[1] 14 St. Simon, 13. Paris, 1877.

rehearsals of his new play, "Artemire." He pronounced the epitaph of "the System," as Law's finance was called, when he remarked that "paper was now reduced to its intrinsic value." [1]

The curtain rose upon "Artemire" for the first time February 13, 1720, at the worst moment of the collapse, to a house yielding five thousand one hundred and sixty-seven francs. The play had been read at Sully, at Villars, and elsewhere, with the applause invariably bestowed by friendly circles upon works submitted to their judgment. The Abbé de Bussi attended a reading of the play by the first actress of the time, Madame Lecouvreur, and cried to such an extent that he caught a cold from his own tears. The friends of the author were present in force. Happily for art, the public, just master of us all, has no friends; but pays its money, and lets the author know, to an absolute certainty, whether it has or has not received an equivalent in pleasure. "I told the author," says a letter of the day (Brossette to J. B. Rousseau), "that this tragedy, in which he had nothing to depend on but his own genius, would not have the destiny of his 'Œdipe.' It is too much work at once, especially for a young man, to have to invent the plot, the characters, the sentiments, and the arrangement, to say nothing of the versification." And so it proved. The opening lines, melodious and strong, were applauded: —

> "Oui, tous ces conquérants rassemblés sur ce bord,
> Soldats sous Alexandre et rois après sa mort,
> Fatigués de forfaits, et lassés de la guerre,
> Ont rendu le repos qu'ils otaient à la terre." [2]

The passage opened the play happily, and seemed to promise a worthy presentation of a great period. But the story was fatally defective, and could not interest. The action was slow, the characters were hateful, the heroine unattractive, the hero absent. Powerful passages and epigrammatic lines cannot retain attention, nor long disarm censure. Before the end of the first act, ominous hisses were heard; and during one of the later scenes the noise and contention were so violent that

[1] Duvernet, chapter iv.

[2] "Yes, all these conquerors assembled on this shore, soldiers under Alexander and kings after his death, sated with crimes and tired of war, have given back the repose of which they deprived the earth."

the author — so tradition reports — sprang from his box to the stage, and addressed the spectators. As soon as he was recognized, we are told, the confusion subsided, and the rest of the play was listened to without interruption. He perceived, however, as soon as he saw his play through the eyes of an audience, that the story was weak beyond remedy, and he resolved to withdraw the piece from the stage. The mother of the Duke of Orleans, who was well disposed towards him, and to whom he had dedicated his first play, desired to see it performed again. He employed ten days in altering it. The piece was better received than before, and was repeated eight times, with some applause, to diminishing audiences; until, on the 8th of March, 1720, it was presented for the last time to a house of two thousand three hundred and fifty-three francs. The stringency of the times may have had something to do with the failure. The author, however, refrained from publishing his piece, used some of its lines in other plays, and left nothing of "Artemire" but fragments and scenes.

The regent had discovered, meanwhile, the true author of "Les Philippiques," and was inclined, as it seems, to atone for exiling the wrong poet. Voltaire caused some cantos of "La Henriade" to be copied for him in Thieriot's best handwriting; and, besides accepting these, the regent heard the poet himself read some passages of the poem. The partial failure of his play may have abated his self-confidence a little, and made him over-sensitive to criticism; for it was at this period that, on hearing some friends criticise with unusual freedom his "Henriade," he suddenly cried out, "It is only fit to be burned, then," and tossed it into the fire. The President Hénault, who was one of the critics on this occasion, relates what followed: —

"I ran after him, and drew the manuscript from the midst of the flames, saying that I had done more than the heirs of Virgil when they refrained from burning the Æneid, as Virgil had recommended, since I had snatched from the fire 'La Henriade,' which Voltaire was going to burn with his own hands. If I wished, I might glorify this action by recalling to mind that beautiful picture by Raphael, in the Vatican, which represents Augustus preventing Virgil from burning the Æneid. But I am not Augustus, and Raphael is no more."

Hénault handed the manuscript back to the author, saying, "Do not think the poem better than the hero whom you celebrate. Despite his faults, he was a great king and the best of men." So "La Henriade" was saved. "Do you remember," the president wrote, years after, "that your poem cost me a pair of lace ruffles?"

Voltaire's friend and comrade, De Génonville, whom he had known in the days when both were copying law papers in the office of the solicitor Alain, died suddenly this spring, to Voltaire's lasting sorrow. The Duchess of Villars, to distract his mind from sombre thoughts, took him away with her to her country-house, which was always full of company in the fine season, and thus he resumed his life of wandering from château to château. From Villars he wrote in June to Fontenelle, an amusing letter, — half in prose, half in verse, — in which he tells the veteran author that his work on the "Plurality of Worlds" was keeping the ladies out-of-doors a great part of the night observing the stars, much to the displeasure of the gentlemen, who were obliged to humor and accompany them. "As we pass the night," he added, "in observing the stars, we greatly neglect the sun, not returning his visit until he has run two thirds of his course." He did not forget the interest excited in the gay company of the château by Fontenelle's popularization of astronomical science.

CHAPTER XVI.

BEGINNINGS OF HIS FORTUNE.

From the gay and brilliant life of the château he was summoned, in December, 1721, to the bedside of his father, dying of dropsy in Paris. The incongruous family of the Arouets was once more assembled in their old home, — Armand, François-Marie, their sister Marguerite, and her husband, M. Mignot, of the Chamber of Accounts. The family letters of Voltaire have not been preserved, and, consequently, we know little of the terms upon which these ill-assorted relations lived. Armand, the elder son, a bachelor thirty-eight years of age, had developed into a religionist of the most credulous and abject type. He was one of the *dévots* of that age, who wore hair shirts, fasted in Lent to a perilous extreme, believed in the "miracles" of the day, and gave money profusely to any Tartuffe who knew how to play his part. François, on the contrary, had become the man-of-the-world of the period, sobered a little by his twenty-eight years, as well as by his arduous, though desultory, pursuit of his vocation. Their sister was a married woman with children, always dear to her younger brother.

What the old man thought at this time of his fool in prose and his fool in verse we can infer from the manner in which he disposed of his property. December 29, 1721, two days before his death, he resigned his office in the Chamber of Accounts, then yielding thirteen thousand francs a year, to Armand, his eldest child; charging him, however, as it seems, with part of the portions of his other children. To Voltaire he bequeathed property yielding an annual revenue of four thousand two hundred and fifty francs. Both these sons had reached the years of discretion, but, as their father thought, only the years, — not the discretion. He feared that his fool in prose would waste his substance upon Jansenist devotees,

and that his fool in verse would waste his life among the grandees whom he amused. He accordingly confided his estate to a trustee, M. de Nicolai, president of the Chamber of Accounts, and gave him unusual powers. He made him, in fact, guardian of his sons, as well as trustee of his property; and M. de Nicolai, we are told, "adopted both the brothers, and continued to regard Voltaire as his son" long after his duty as trustee was performed.[1]

These arrangements made, the old man, on the first day of the year, 1722, breathed his last, and on the next day, as the parish record shows, he was followed to the grave in Paris by his two sons and his son-in-law.

There was, as Voltaire intimates, a brief revival of tenderness among the members of the family on this occasion, followed by increased estrangement of the brothers. M. de Nicolai, their guardian, was a personage of old descent and high rank, one of the *noblesse de robe*, not accustomed to be in haste, and he was four years in giving each his share of the paternal estate. Voltaire, as his letters show, fretted under this delay, threatened an appeal to the law, seems actually to have brought a suit of some kind; and, although he came to his inheritance at last, his circumstances for the time were not improved by his father's death. He had even lost the possible asylum of his father's house, and, as yet, possessed no secure status of his own. The regent, probably, had this view of the case presented to his consideration. A few days after the funeral of the poet's father, "Le Mercure," a Paris gazette of the time, published the following notice: —

"M. Arouet de Voltaire, the death of whose father was recently announced, has obtained from the king, through the recommendation of the Duke of Orleans, a pension of two thousand francs. His poem of Henry IV. will appear very soon, and it is confidently expected that the work when printed will sustain the reputation which it has acquired from perusals of the manuscript."

Here was something at last which the deceased notary himself would have confessed to be solid, if insufficient. The recipient of the royal bounty was aware of its insufficiency, and was much employed, from this time onward, in improving his

[1] 1 Maynard, 102.

circumstances. The father, indeed, as fathers often do, misinterpreted both his sons; for Armand acquired a very good estate, a share of which his brother inherited, and François, as all the world knows, became the richest man of letters that ever lived. He had discovered at twenty-eight that (to use the language of the late Lord Lytton) "the man who would raise himself to be a power must *begin* by securing a pecuniary independence."

"I am often asked [Voltaire writes in his "Mémoires"] by what art I have come to live like a farmer-general, and it is good to tell it, in order that my example may be of service. I saw so many men of letters poor and despised that I made up my mind a long time ago that I would not increase their number. In France a man must be anvil or hammer; I was born anvil. A slender patrimony becomes smaller every day, because in the long run everything increases in price, and government often taxes both income and money. It is necessary to watch the operations which the ministry, ever in arrears and ever on the change, makes in the finances of the state. There is always some one of these by which a private person can profit without incurring obligation to any one; and nothing is so agreeable as to be the author of your own fortune. The first step costs some pains; the others are easy. You must be economical in your youth, and you find yourself in your old age in possession of a capital that surprises you; and that is the time of life when fortune is most necessary to us."[1]

Particulars of the transactions by which he profited so well will meet us from time to time. For a bachelor who lived in other people's châteaux, he was already in tolerable circumstances, and probably never spent, after his father's death, his whole income. He generally had capital at command with which to avail himself of any chance which the exigencies of a ministry or the needs of an individual might throw in his way. He liked to lend money to a lord of good estate upon interest at ten per cent., and had no objection to buying an annuity at a rate favorable to himself, from the apparent fragility of his constitution. The list of his debtors included at length a considerable number of the dukes, princes, and other grand seigneurs, at whose houses he was frequently a guest, and where he seemed to be nothing but the entertaining "little Arouet," a poet of promise, who arranged moonlight *fêtes* for the ladies, and supplied original verses for the same.

[1] 2 Œuvres, 80.

The owners of the world are they who strongly *desire* to own; and this is the only trait common to them all. Voltaire possessed this qualification, and was able to gratify it without a loss of time fatal to his proper pursuits. He usually spent very little money, and always carefully invested his surplus, — a process which, as he remarks, yields surprising results in a long life.

He pushed his fortune at this time in every way open to him. Cardinal Dubois, notorious for his debauchery and profusion, who held benefices and civil posts that yielded him a million and a half of francs per annum, was the regent's first minister and confidant. A bad minister and worse man, he was not as pernicious to France as the austerely moral priests who made Louis XIV. expel the Huguenots and loose the Bull Unigenitus. He had some taste in the arts, and was not inclined to make the interests of France quite subordinate to those of the church. Voltaire paid diligent court to him, and offered him his services; having then, as always, a taste for public employment. The cardinal gave him a piece of work to do, the relation of which presents neither of them in an heroic light. It was to unearth (*déterrer* is Voltaire's own word) a French Jew, Levi Salomon by name, who was supposed to be a spy of the emperor, and, perhaps, charged with designs hostile to France. Our tragic poet got upon his track, drew up a "Mémoire" concerning him, giving an account of his past career and present condition, but not unearthing any very valuable information.

"Monseigneur [he writes to the cardinal, May 28, 1722], I send your Eminence a little memorandum of what I have been able to discover touching the Jew of whom I had the honor to speak to you. If your Eminence judges the thing important, shall I presume to suggest that a Jew, being of no country except the one in which he makes money, can as well betray the king to the emperor as the emperor to the king? . . . . I can, more easily than any one else in the world, pass into Germany under the pretext of visiting J. B. Rousseau, to whom I wrote two months ago that I wished to show my poem to Prince Eugene and to himself [the poet Rousseau being still in exile, with asylum at the court of Prince Eugene]. I have even received some letters from the prince, in one of which he does me the honor to say that he should be very glad to see me. If these considerations could induce your Eminence to employ me in something, I

entreat you to believe that you would not be dissatisfied with me, and that I should be eternally grateful for being allowed to serve your Eminence."

This was followed by the memorandum referred to, from which we learn that Levi Salomon had been employed by many ministers as a spy; that he had been a spy upon the Duke of Marlborough, and probably had a good many secrets worth knowing. The cardinal appears to have given the poet a roving commission to visit Germany, taking the old French city of Cambrai on the way, of which Cardinal Dubois was archbishop. There was to be a great meeting of diplomatists at Cambrai this year, for the settlement of affairs in Europe which had been left unsettled by the last peace. Voltaire was to attend this important congress, holding apparently *some* commission or license from the cardinal archbishop of Cambrai, either general or special, private or public. Cambrai is a hundred and fifty miles northeast of Paris, near to what is now Belgium, and on the high road to Brussels.

All the continental governments appear then to have placed much dependence upon the spy system, and under Dubois Paris swarmed with spies. In his later works Voltaire mentions the fact with reprobation; as well he might, for he was indebted to the spy Beauregard for his eleven months in the Bastille. That very Beauregard, spy as he was, held a captain's commission in a noted regiment of the royal army, which implied noble lineage; and Voltaire, as we have seen, did not disdain to act as a spy upon a spy. While he was at Versailles this summer, going about among the cabinets preparing for his journey and making interest for his poem, he had a startling insight into the spy system, which led to consequences far more painful than a polite detention at the king's château of the Bastille. He was in the rooms of M. Claude Leblanc, the minister of war, one of the most distinguished members of the regent's administration, a statesman of long experience and wide renown, who is remembered to this day for some improvements introduced by him into the military system of France. Who should enter but Captain Beauregard, as if he were a guest invited to dinner! The minister received the spy with more than distinction, — with familiarity. The irascible poet, at this astounding spectacle, lost his self-control, and said, among other things, —

"I was well aware that spies were paid for their services, but I did *not* know that their recompense was to eat at the minister's own table!"

He withdrew, leaving Beauregard furious, who at once declared his purpose to be avenged. "Then manage it so," said the minister, "that no one will see anything of it."[1]

Shortly after, as Voltaire was crossing one of the bridges in a sedan chair, Beauregard met him and assaulted him with a cane, inflicting many blows, and leaving a mark upon his face. The assailant immediately after rejoined his regiment in the country. Voltaire entered a complaint in a criminal court, and pursued his criminal with a sustained vivacity all his own, and never rested till he had him in prison. The minister Leblanc, falling into discredit in the nick of time, the spy remained in confinement for several months, and we see Voltaire directing the prosecution against him from remote places, "ruining himself in expense," until, as we conjecture, Leblanc, returning to favor, was able to rescue his agent so far as to change his prison into exile. The poet speaks of Beauregard as "the man of the handcuffs," which is probably a figure of speech. The important fact is, that he sought redress from the laws, and sought it with unflagging energy till he obtained it in some degree. Redress is of course impossible for an injury so gross, and Voltaire, during his long life of battle with the powers of this world, was never allowed long to forget that he had been beaten by a spy on the bridge of Sèvres.

Once, as we learn from himself, he was taken for a spy by some soldiers of the regiment of the Prince de Conti. "The prince, their colonel," he adds, "happened to pass by, and invited me to supper, instead of having me hanged." If it had been Levi Salomon who had pointed him out to the soldiers as a spy, and had showed them his letter and memorandum to Cardinal Dubois, the Prince de Conti would not the less have invited him to supper, but it is not clear how the accused poet could have explained away the charge to the soldiers.

[1] 2 Mémoires de M. Marais, 302.

CHAPTER XVII.

JOURNEY TO HOLLAND.

He did not set out alone upon this long and interesting journey. One of the grand ladies whom he had met in country châteaux, the Marquise de Rupelmonde, chanced to be going to Holland this summer, and he accepted her invitation to take a seat in her post-chaise. She was the daughter of a marshal of France, an old soldier of the wars of the late king, now governor of Metz. She was also the widow of a Flemish nobleman, who had fallen in battle, after a display of valor that gave his name wide celebrity. Young, rich, agreeable, and thus doubly distinguished, she was appointed, in 1725, one of the *dames de palais* to the coming queen of France. At present she had interests in the Low Countries, and appears to have still kept an establishment at La Hague. Cambrai was on the high-road to Holland, and there our poet may have had something to do for Cardinal Dubois. Brussels could be reached by a slight *détour*, where he desired to meet "our master," Jean-Baptiste Rousseau, as he styled the exiled poet, and to read to him some cantos of the new poem. At the Hague, which had not yet ceased to be a type-foundry and book mart of Europe, he had important business of his own. It was a piece of his usual good luck to find traveling his road a *grande dame* who loved his poetry, relished his conversation, and paid all expenses.

We know one of the chief subjects of conversation between the young widow and the young bachelor, as they traveled northward in the pleasant days of July, 1722. The lady had asked him what she ought to think concerning the vexed subject of religion. It was on this journey that he put the substance of his answer in the form of an Epistle in verse, addressed to her under the name of the "beautiful Uranie." This poem is noted as being the first of his works in which

he gives with any fullness his opinions upon religion. It is simply an elegant and very spirited statement of the deism of that century, the chief position of which was that the prodigies related in the sacred books of all religions are to be taken as legends, not as history. As legends, they possess value and beauty; regarded as history, they become pernicious and infinitely absurd. This Epistle is very much in the style of that "Moïsade" taught him in childhood by the Abbé de Châteauneuf. He dwelt upon the folly of supposing that the Creator of men had "drowned the fathers and died for the children," without having reclaimed the race from wickedness by either method. Upon this theme he enlarged in more than a hundred melodious lines, and, doubtless, added many effective points in conversation on the road. One of his topics was the account given in the Gospels of the life and death of Jesus; and this he treated with a freedom which, in 1722, must have been startling to a lady whose mind, he intimates, was not yet made up: —

"He sprang from a people obscure, imbecile, unstable, insensate lovers of superstition, conquered by their neighbors, crouching in slavery and the eternal contempt of other nations. The Son of God, God himself, makes himself the countryman of this odious people. Born of a Jewess, he creeps under his mother; he suffers under her eyes the infirmities of infancy. Long a low workman, plane in hand, his early days are lost in this base employment."

The narrative is continued in this spirit, and then the poet descants upon the vast absurdity of supposing the American tribes and other remote nations to be consigned to eternal anguish for not being acquainted with these events. He concludes his poem by telling the "uncertain Uranie" what to believe: —

"Believe that the eternal wisdom of the Most High has, with his own hand, engraved at the bottom of thy heart natural religion. Believe that the native candor of thy soul will not be the object of God's eternal hate. Believe that before his throne, in all times and in all places, the heart of the just person is precious. Believe that a modest bonze, a charitable dervish, finds favor in his eyes sooner than a pitiless Jansenist or an ambitious pontiff. . . . God judges us according to our virtues, not our sacrifices."

Doubtless the inexhaustible theme was amply discussed on the way to Cambrai, and probably he found in the lady a pupil willing to learn from his philosophy "to despise the horrors of the tomb and the terrors of another life."

They reached, in due time, the archiepiscopal city of Cambrai, noted then for a magnificent cathedral destroyed in the Revolution, but known to us as having given a word to the English language, — cambric, — because the fabric of that name was first made there. The town was full of distinguished company, with nothing to do, awaiting the opening of the congress, and they received Madame de Rupelmonde and her poet with enthusiasm. Parties were given in their honor, and ladies disputed with one another the privilege of entertaining them. At one grand supper, given by the wife of the French ambassador, the cry arose that they must have the pleasure of seeing "Œdipe" performed the very next day, in the presence of the author. There was a difficulty: the Spanish ambassador had already ordered "Les Plaideurs" of Racine, and no diplomatist was willing to risk offending so weighty a personage. Voltaire undertook the task of inducing the Spaniard to allow the change desired, and produced upon the spot a rhymed petition in "the name of Rupelmonde." The petition being instantly granted, he brought back to the company a reply in rhyme, also of his own composition, in which he informed them that on the next day the actors would play both "Œdipe" and its author; that is, "Œdipe," and, afterwards, the travesty of the same, as performed in the minor theatres of Paris. It marks the manners of that age that this response, made as if *to* Madame de Rupelmonde, mentioning her by name, and read to the finest company in Europe, both ladies and gentlemen, should have opened with as palpable a *double entendre* as language could convey.

Even more remarkable was the letter that he wrote from Cambrai to Cardinal Dubois; a *mélange* of prose and verse, of banter and homage, which the cardinal allowed to be handed about in Paris drawing-rooms, as something too good to be kept to himself. On taking leave of the cardinal at Versailles, Voltaire is reported to have said, "I pray you, Monseigneur, not to forget that formerly the Voitures were

protected by the Richelieus." To which the minister is said to have made the rude reply, "It is easier to find Voitures than Richelieus." Nothing abashed, this young dramatist of one success wrote thus to the cardinal prime minister, from Cambrai: —

"A beauty whom they name Rupelmonde, with whom the Loves and I run about the world of late, and who gives law to us all, wishes that on the instant I write you. My muse, as attentive to please her as you, accepts with transport so charming an employ.

"We arrive, Monseigneur, in your metropolis, where, I believe, all the ambassadors and all the cooks of Europe have given one another rendezvous. It seems that all the ministers of Germany are at Cambrai for no other purpose than to drink the health of the emperor. As for the ambassadors of Spain, one of them hears two masses a day, and the other directs the troop of actors. The English ministers send many couriers to Champagne, but few to London. For the rest, no one expects your Eminence here. It is not thought likely that you will leave the Palais Royal to come to visit your flock. You would be too much annoyed, and we also, if you had to leave the ministry for the apostolate.

"May the gentlemen of the congress, in drinking at this retreat, assure the peace of Europe! May you love your city, my lord, and never come to it! I know that you can make homilies, can walk with a cross-bearer, and can mumble litanies. Give, give rather examples to kings; unite always spirit with prudence; let your great deeds be published everywhere; make yourself blessed of France, without giving at Cambrai any benedictions.

"Remember sometimes, Monseigneur, a man who has, in truth, no other regret than not to be able to converse with your Eminence as often as he could desire, and who, of all the favors you can do him, regards the honor of your conversation as the most flattering."

This is the letter which a prince of the church permitted to "run" in Paris in 1722. "How *could* it have got out?" writes Voltaire to his trumpeter, Thieriot; and, three months later, he asks whether Thieriot *still* hears his letter to Cardinal Dubois spoken of, and what is said of it.[1] Part of the joke was that the Archbishop of Cambrai had never seen Cambrai; and he never did see it. The congress, too, during the four years of its continuance, accomplished nothing but numberless *fêtes* and suppers; and it may be that the design of

[1] Lettres Inédites de Voltaire, page 15.

the cardinal in letting the letter escape was to accustom the public to regard it as a brilliant nullity.

After five or six weeks of gayety and glory among the ambassadors and ladies at Cambrai, we find him at Brussels, seventy miles beyond, where he was to meet "our master," Rousseau, and submit an epic poem to his judgment. J. B. Rousseau, then fifty-two years of age, was no longer the satiric and scoffing Rousseau of other days. He had returned to the bosom of the church; he was writing those fine psalms that figure in his later works; he was conspicuously and, as his enemies thought, ostentatiously religious. It is not necessary to suppose him insincere, as French writers usually do. Men who discard religion because they dislike the restraints which it imposes hold their unbelief by a very uncertain tenure, and are liable in the decline of life to relapse into superstition. It was common then to see persons who were thoughtless unbelievers at twenty become thoughtless devotees at fifty. Voltaire, on the contrary, had developed the merry license of his youth into a clear, intelligent, and positive rejection of all the theological dogmas, except that of a Supreme Being.

He was now in a country that swarmed with rosy and jovial priests, and he regarded them with no more reverence than the people of our prairies regard locusts and grasshoppers. The brave old Duchess of Marlborough had been at Aix and Brussels since the peace, and she was good enough to record her impressions of what she saw there. She thought she discovered in Flanders the cause of atheism. It was the priests' owning three quarters of all the land, and still "squeezing" the half-starved people for money. "In one church where I was lately," she wrote, "there were twenty-seven jolly-face priests that had nothing in the world to do but to say mass for the living and take the dead souls the sooner out of purgatory by their prayers."[1] Voltaire had an opportunity ere-

[1] The duchess writes from Flanders, 1712: "Since I have Room I can't end without giving you some Account how I pass my Time in this Place, which is in visiting Nunnerys and Churches, where I have heard of such Marvells and seen such ridiculous Things as would appear to you incredible if I should set about to describe them, tis so much beyond all that I ever saw or heard of in England of that Religion which I am apt to think has made those Atheists that are in the World, for tis impossible to see the Abuses of the Priests without raising strange

long of talking over these matters with the duchess, and, we may be sure, agreed with her. Indeed, on the first day of his arrival at Brussels, he behaved so irreverently at mass that the people were on the point of turning him out of the church. So Rousseau records, and the culprit himself admits that his behavior was a little disorderly.

The two poets met, neither being aware of the change that had taken place in the other. At first all was cordiality between them, and they were inseparable. Voltaire, as I think, knew Rousseau's innocence of the charge that had exiled him, and must have been sensible to the charm of his verse. He called him by no other name than Master; and, besides reading him portions of "La Henriade," he intrusted the precious manuscript to his keeping for several days. Rousseau praised the poem, only objecting to a few passages wherein the Pope and the priests were not treated quite in the manner of a good Catholic, — passages which the author himself was striving to tone down to the pitch demanded by the official censor. All was well between them until one fatal day, when the two poets, in the presence of Madame de Rupelmonde, read to one another some of their recent minor poems; Rousseau, his "Jugement de Pluton," which ought to have been excellent, for no man has ever employed the Greek legends more happily than he. But the poet had a grievance of ten years' standing, — his exile, — and this grievance was the real subject of the poem. Who can treat with effective grace and dignity an ancient, rankling grievance of his own? Voltaire, being asked his opinion of the satire, answered truly, "It is not in the style

Thoughts in one's Mind, which one checks as soon as one can, and I think tis unnaturall for any Body to have so monstrous a Notion as that there is no God, if the Priests (to get all the Power and Mony themselves) did not act in the Manner that they doe in these Parts, where they have three Parts or four of all the Land in the Country, and yet they are not contented, but squeeze the poor deluded People to get more, who are really half-starved by the vast number of Holydays in which they can't work, and the Mony they must pay when they have it for the Forgivenesse of their Sins. I believe tis from the Charm of Power and Mony that has made many of our Clergymen act as they have don; but my Comfort is, tho a very small one, that if by their Assistance all are quit undon they will not bee the better for it, there is such a vast Number of Priests that must take Place of them, for in one Church where I was lately there were 27 jolly-face Priests that had Nothing in the World to doe but to say Mass for the living and to take the dead Souls the sooner out of Purgatory by their Prayers." (Letters from Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough. London, 1875.)

of our master, the good and great Rousseau." The elder poet, of course, was doubly enamored of this production, and did not conceal his chagrin. He read on the same occasion another poem on the same unfortunate subject, — his own wrongs and the sublime manner in which he had borne them. It was entitled, "To Posterity." The single step between the sublime and the ridiculous was taken by Rousseau in this vainglorious ode, and it drew from Voltaire the well-known comment, "That is an ode, master, which, in my opinion, will never reach its address." He was mistaken, it is true, for the ode is printed every year or two in new editions of Rousseau's poems; but such witticisms sting and are not forgotten.

"Take your revenge!" cried Voltaire. "Here is a little poem which I submit to the judgment of the father of Numa." It was the "Epistle to La Belle Uranie" mentioned above. Rousseau listened to the reading of the audacious work as far as the passage where Jesus Christ is introduced as exercising the low (*lâche*) trade of carpenter. Rousseau broke in upon the reading at this point, saying, "Spare yourself, sir, the trouble of reading more; it is a horrible impiety!" Voltaire replaced his poem in the portfolio, and is reported to have said, "Let us go to the theatre. I am sorry the author of the 'Moïsade' did not notify the public that he had turned devotee." Something resembling this he may have said. They went to the theatre, but not with happy effect upon their minds, and the estrangement thus begun was aggravated into hostility, which time only embittered.

At Brussels, where, as at Cambrai, he seemed to be immersed in pleasure, he did not lose sight of the main object, the publication of his poem; and he sent to Thieriot designs for nine engravings, one for each canto, to be executed at Paris.

Early in October he was at the Hague, the scene of his early love and folly. At Brussels he had his letters addressed to the French ambassador's; at the Hague he lived at the hotel of Madame de Rupelmonde. His business in the Dutch capital was to make arrangements for getting his poem printed and published there simultaneously with the Paris edition, for which he confidently hoped to get the "privilege." In case the censors should refuse the privilege

for France, the Holland edition might perhaps serve for both countries. He found a willing publisher, and we see him busy enough preparing to print, and still softening the passages in which a Paris censor might find heresy, political or theological. He was much matured since his last visit, and he had time now to observe and consider the wondrous spectacle that greeted him on every side in a city where the human mind was not in suppression. In glorious Holland valiant men had conquered a part of their heritage of freedom, and had reduced the priest to something like safe dimensions. In those beautiful days of October he found the country a paradise of meadows, canals, and foliage; Amsterdam the storehouse of the world, with a thousand vessels in port, and half a million people, among whom he discovered not one idler, not one pauper, not one dandy, not one insolent. He met the prime minister on foot in Amsterdam, without lackeys, in the midst of the people. In the absence of personal government, no one in Holland had any court to make, and people did not "put themselves in hedge" to see a prince go by. At the Hague, the crowd of ambassadors made more magnificence and more society. "I pass my life there," he writes, "between labor and pleasure, and thus live Holland fashion and French fashion. We have here a detestable opera, but, by way of compensation, I see Calvinist ministers, Arminians, Socinians, Rabbis, Anabaptists, who discourse to admiration, and who, in truth, are all in the right."

He passed the time very agreeably in Holland, floating on the canal between Amsterdam and the Hague, riding daily on horseback, playing at tennis, drinking tokay, composing circulars and proposals, dining out, and declaiming portions of his poem to admiring circles. As the fine season drew to an end, he was obliged to turn his thoughts toward Paris, where Thieriot was getting subscriptions to "La Henriade," and making interest in its behalf in all possible ways. No *grande dame* or ambassador happening to be going to Paris, with a seat to spare in a vehicle, he was to perform the journey, as he remarked, on his own ill-covered bones (*mes maigres fesses*); that is, on horseback, taking his own saddle, and getting a fresh horse at each post-house. "Pray

to God," he writes to his comrade, "that I may have good horses on the journey." He asks him, also, to buy an excellent horse for him at Paris for two hundred or two hundred and fifty francs. "You have only to charge with this commission," he adds, "the same people who sold my horses." The cost of this mode of traveling was moderate, but the thrifty poet probably got home for nothing, even if he did not profit a little by the journey. He writes to Thieriot to send him the *exact* price paid in France for an escalin, a florin, a pantagon, a ducat, and a Spanish pistole, coins current in Holland, and perhaps a little cheaper there than in France. The exchange upon a bagful of pistoles and ducats might well pay for the cost of traveling with his own saddle on hired horses.[1] On the last day of October, 1722, he was as far on his return as Cambrai, where he distributed circulars announcing his poem as about to appear, and inviting subscriptions.

Never was an enterprise more vigorously "pushed" than this one of publishing an epic poem upon Henry of Navarre. While Thieriot at Paris was receiving subscriptions, and endeavoring to remove the scruples of the censor, the author of the work was riding from post to post, from château to château, all the way from Holland, down through Brabant, skirting Germany, and so working his way by the end of the year to the city of Orleans, a hundred miles south of Paris, exciting everywhere an interest in the forthcoming work. Near Orleans was the abode of Lord Bolingbroke, La Source, a bewitching estate, bought with money gained by speculation in the schemes of John Law, and brought to high perfection by English taste and liberality. The exiled statesman was living there with his French wife, the Marquise de Villette,— himself a Frenchman in his literary tastes, as well as in his easy morals. Voltaire was his guest at La Source in the early days of the year 1723, and the poet wrote a letter there to Thieriot, which was perhaps meant to be handed about in Paris. At least, we know it *was* handed about, and with effect. He assured Thieriot that, in the illustrious Englishman he found all the learning of his own country and all the politeness of theirs, a master of the

[1] Voltaire á Ferney, page 304.

French language, and a discriminating appreciator of the excellent literature of all lands.

"After such a portraiture of Lord Bolingbroke, it is hardly becoming in me to say that madame and himself have been infinitely satisfied with my poem. In the enthusiasm of their approbation, they place it above all the poetical works which have appeared in France, but I know how much I ought to abate of such extravagant eulogium. I am going to pass three months in meriting a part of it. It seems to me that, by dint of correcting, the work is taking at length a suitable form."

The diarizing Mathieu Marais, advocate to the parliament of Paris, no friend to notaries' sons who visited lordly châteaux, read this letter, and was almost persuaded by it to think better of "the little Arouet" for a moment.

"He has been charmed [wrote the advocate in his journal] with the mind of that Englishman, and has written to Paris a marvelous letter about him. So highly did milord praise his poem, which he read to him, that they are printing it in Holland by subscription, with beautiful illustrations. If it is as fine as that of Racine [son of the great dramatist, and author of "La Grace," a religious poem in four cantos, published in 1720], we shall have two great poets who are petty men: for this Racine, whom I have seen two or three times, has but a frivolous mind, and is without tact in conversation; and the other is a fool, who despises the Sophocles and the Corneilles, who has thought to be a man of the court, who has got himself caned, and who will never know anything because he thinks he knows everything."[1]

An amusing specimen of contemporary judgment. The Duke of St. Simon alludes to Voltaire in the same lofty manner, as a person who had gained "a kind of standing in the world" through his follies and the general decline of morals and manners.

We must own that these puffs preliminary and the general system of "pushing" carried on for some years by Voltaire and Thieriot do not present a poet in a romantic light. We are accustomed, in these happier days, to think of our poets as living in pleasant suburban places, in houses of their own, picturesque or venerable, maturing their works in peaceful seclusion, and having them spread abroad over the earth without

[1] 2 Journal of Mathieu Marais, page 377.

any interference on the part of the author. It was far otherwise in the France of 1722, when Voltaire submitted his poem to the censure. The system of publishing, as we find it now, did not exist; nor did the laws exist by which an author holds property in the products of his own mind. The measures taken by Voltaire to create an interest in his work before its publication were all necessary in a country governed by caprice. Such expedients were as necessary in 1722 as they were in 1789, when Beaumarchais, by similar arts and equal persistence, forced his "Figaro" upon the Paris stage against the king himself.

The literary sensation of this very year, 1722, well illustrates the precarious tenure by which literary men then held their subsistence. A stroke of a minister's pen suspended the labors of Le Sage, the author of "Gil Blas," as well as of the whole coterie of authors and composers who sustained the comic opera. The comic opera had become too popular. It was drawing away the fashionable world of Paris from the Théâtre Français, in which the works of the classic dramatists were performed, and the actors had interest enough to procure an order designed to suppress the comic opera, and to reduce the minor theatres to their former *répertoire* of songs, music, recitations, Punch, and the ballet. Instead of expressing this intention in plain language, the order set forth that on the minor stage there should be *only one speaking character at a time*. Le Sage and his colleagues, refusing to work under this hard condition, resorted in despair to a certain Alexis Piron, an untried hanger-on of the theatre, the only man in Europe, perhaps, capable of producing an effective three-act comedy, and keep within the iron limits of the new decree. The order of 1722 brought the manager of the comic opera a suppliant to his garret, and in forty-eight hours Alexis produced a play which filled the void. Nothing gave the Parisians of that generation keener delight than to see an arbitrary decree like this at once obeyed and evaded. But, in truth, the comedy which the merry Alexis produced on this occasion would have amused even a hostile audience, so full was it of those broad, strong comic effects which audiences cannot resist. He had but one speaker on the stage at a time, but he enabled an anxious manager to exhibit every night, to the utmost advantage, his

whole company of actors, singers, dancers, and gymnasts. "Harlequin-Deucalion" was the name of the play. It opens while the storm is still raging which has drowned all the world except Deucalion, who has saved himself by getting astride of a barrel. In the midst of the tempest, this sole survivor of the human family comes bounding upon the stage, barrel and all, with a huge knapsack on his back. The first scene consists of a long soliloquy, in which he makes several humorous local allusions, and spouts passages parodied from plays that were running at the time, and were perfectly familiar to the audience. Every sentence in this soliloquy was a distinct hit, and would make a French audience laugh. As he sits down to dinner, talking to himself, he notices that his language has a sort of mad propensity to rhyme, which puzzles him, and causes him to look around to see where he is. He discovers that he and his barrel have landed upon Mount Parnassus, which accounts for his poetizing. The reader, who knows what a curious creature an audience is, can easily imagine what boisterous fun this rhyming trick would create, particularly when it manifested itself in burlesque parodies of plays as well known to Frenchmen then as Hamlet is to us now.

And so the play goes on, until every folly of the day is hit, and every member of the company appears. The failure of Voltaire's play "Artemire" does not escape. In the second act, Deucalion appears mounted upon Pegasus. He spurs and lashes the noble animal until he has roused *himself* to a high pitch of exaltation, when he declaims those opening verses of Voltaire's play that promised such great things: —

> "Oui, tous ces conquérants rassemblés sur ce bord,
> Soldats sous Alexandre, et rois après sa mort."

Having delivered these famous lines in a tragedian's most swelling manner, he falls headlong from Pegasus upon his back, and gets up dolefully rubbing himself, and saying, as if he had lost the word, "*Après sa mort, après sa mort;* I am gone all lame. By Jove, it is a pity; I was getting on so well."

The play was a prodigious success, and the government tacitly permitted so audacious and brilliant a defiance of its decree. Voltaire was present at one of the performances of the piece, and he may have learned from it how safe it was to evade

the strong measures of a government that was itself not strong. According to the jolly Alexis, the author of "Artemire" was not displeased at the allusions to himself in "Deucalion," saying to the author at the close, "I felicitate myself, sir, upon having had a part in your success;" whereupon Piron protested he did not know whose the lines were that he had caused to be spouted from the back of Pegasus.

To this day, French people love to relate encounters of wit between Voltaire and Piron. Piron himself records many of them, in which the author of "Harlequin-Deucalion" invariably comes off victorious. "*Eo rus*," wrote Voltaire, one day, to notify Piron that he was "going into the country." Piron, to surpass this epistle in brevity, replied by one letter, "*I*," which is Latin for "Go." But then this anecdote is related of other men. For fifty years, Piron and Voltaire, known generators of anecdotes, were accustomed to have spurious offspring laid at their doors.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"LA HENRIADE" PUBLISHED.

It is May, 1723. Voltaire and his friend Thieriot are established at Paris, in the town-house of the Marquis de Bernières, a distinguished magistrate of Rouen (*président à mortier*), whose wife had long been one of Voltaire's most familiar correspondents. M. de Bernières was good enough to let part of his house to the author of "Œdipe" at six hundred francs per annum, and to permit him to pay a further sum of about twelve hundred francs per annum for other expenses of Thieriot and himself when they were in Paris, — an arrangement creditable to the good sense of both parties. The compact was drawn in proper form by a notary, — Armand Arouet, *mon frère*, — who also gave legal receipts for the rent, and seems always at this period to have had money of François's in his hands. During Voltaire's long absences from Paris, he occasionally sends Thieriot to *mon frère* for money, and often urges him not to forget to "dine a little" now and then with his sister.

The house of M. de Bernières was situated on that part of the bank of the Seine which was then called Quai des Théatins, now Quai Voltaire, and it was nearly opposite the gardens of the Tuileries. It ought to have been an agreeable site; but Voltaire complains of "this noisy *quai*," and explains the cause of the noise. Paris in 1723 was very far from being either the elegant or the commodious city which it is now. Servants and others came down in great numbers to the river to draw water, and one of the places convenient for the purpose was this Quai des Théatins, under the windows of a laborious and susceptible author, correcting an epic and composing a new play. He writes to Madame de Bernières, who was about to return from Rouen to Paris, telling her that her rooms were making ready, and urging her to come sooner than she had intended.

"At least [he adds], grant me another favor, which I solicit with the utmost urgency. I find myself, I know not how, burdened with three servants, whom I cannot afford to keep, and have not the resolution to discharge. One of these three *messieurs* is poor La Brie, whom you saw long ago in my service. He is too old to be a lackey, incapable of being a valet, and just the man for a door-keeper. You have a Swiss who is not in your service to please *you*, but to sell at your door bad wine to all the water-carriers, who come here every day and make your house a nasty wine-shop. If the desire of having at your door an animal with a shoulder-knot, whom you pay dearly every year to serve you ill three months and sell bad wine twelve; if, I say, the desire of having your door decorated with such an ornament is not very near your heart, I ask it of you as a favor to give the place to my poor La Brie. You will oblige me sensibly. I have almost as strong a wish to see him at your door as to see you arrive at your house. The place will be the making of him; it will cost you much less than a Swiss, and will serve you much better. If, besides that, the pleasure of obliging me counts for something in the arrangements of your house, I flatter myself that you will not refuse me this favor, which I ask with importunity. I await your answer to reform my little establishment."

A moving epistle, but it did not suffice. Next year there was a robbery in the house, and the poet wrote to his comrade, "This comes of having an imbecile and interested Swiss at your door, keeping a wine-shop, instead of an attached *portier*." Poor La Brie remained upon his hands, and he was obliged to reform his household otherwise. Behold him, then, settled in his new quarters with his factotum Thieriot. "La Henriade" was substantially finished, including notes, remarks, pictures, an outline of the history of Henry IV., and a dedication to the king, then a rude, robust boy of thirteen, delighting in the slaughter of small birds. Subscription papers had been accessible to the public for some months, with results far from flattering. "You have undertaken a work," said M. de Malezieu to the author, one day, "which is not suited to our nation. The French have not the epic head. Though you should write as well as Racine and Boileau, it will be much if they read you."[1] The comparative failure of the subscriptions was broadly burlesqued at the theatre which had been the recent scene of Piron's triumph, and the poet did not rel-

[1] Essai sur la Poésie Épique par Voltaire, 13 Œuvres, 542.

ish the jest, for he was not in the best humor. Beauregard was still in jail, and a cause of expense to him; he was kept out of his share of his father's estate; the subscriptions were not as productive of cash as he had hoped; expense followed upon expense, with dim prospect of reimbursement. Worst of all, it now began to be agonizingly doubtful whether the poem would be allowed to appear in France, and he dared not use the proceeds of the subscriptions, for fear of having to return them. Once he ventured to take two hundred francs from that "sacred fund," but made haste to restore it. We cannot wonder, then, to find him writing to Thieriot this year that the burlesque at the theatre had *not* sharpened the bitterness of his cup, and that he willingly *forgave* those scoundrels of authors the buffooneries which were their trade.

How could he, at the age of twenty-nine, have been so little acquainted with the court as to expect the "privilege" of publishing in France such a work as "La Henriade"? He did expect it most confidently. He had softened or removed, as he supposed, every passage that the most limited priest or the most arrogant prelate could seize upon as objectionable. He had read large portions of it to the regent, and had changed certain passages with a particular view to conciliate Cardinal Dubois. But, heavens! there was a tone in the very dedication to the king which must have startled the censor of a government like this, which, at the best, could only hand the reins of power from a dissolute Dubois to a virtuous Fleury, both priests and both cardinals, — a government destined for the next sixty-six years to invest with the attraction of forbidden fruit every bright and free utterance of the human mind.

"SIRE: Every work in which the great deeds of Henry IV. are spoken of ought to be offered to your majesty. It is the blood of that hero which flows in your veins. You are king only because he was a great man; and France, that wishes you as much virtue as he possessed, and more happiness, flatters itself that the life and the throne which you owe to him will engage you to imitate him.

"Fortunate in having known adversity, he felt for the miseries of men, and softened the rigors of a rule from which he had suffered himself. Other kings have courtiers; he had friends. His heart was full of tenderness for his true servants.

"That king, who truly loved his subjects, never regarded their complaints as sedition, nor the remonstrances of magistrates as encroachment upon the sovereign authority. Shall I say it, sire? Yes; truth commands me so to do. It is a thing very shameful to kings, this astonishment we experience when they sincerely love the happiness of their people. May you one day accustom us to regard that virtue as something appertaining to your crown! It was the true love of Henry IV. for France which made him adored by his subjects."

There is something in this dedication that savors of the free air of Holland which the author had lately inhaled. It was the utterance of a citizen, not of a courtier, and it did not conciliate. The poem itself related the bloodiest triumph of intolerance Europe has known, — the massacres of St. Bartholomew, one hundred and fifty years before. The natural effect of the poem upon every intelligent mind was to excite a horror of intolerant religion, as the one baleful and hideous thing of modern history, attesting its hellish character in every age by fire and massacre; the direct cause of the worst things man has ever done against man. The poem exhibited brave and humane men turned into monsters by intolerant religion; "invoking the Lord while slaughtering their brothers, and, their arms wet with the blood of innocent children, daring to offer to God that execrable incense." It showed French rivers flowing red with French blood, and bearing to the sea the bodies of Frenchmen slain by Frenchmen, set on to the fell work by crafty priests. It showed Elizabeth, queen of the "proud, indomitable English," saying to Henry of Navarre, "A great man ought not to dread the futile thunders of Rome," — a power "inflexible to the conquered, complaisant to conquerors, ready, as interest dictates, either to absolve or condemn." It gave in harmonious and powerful verse a catalogue of the unspeakable things done by fanatics in every age: mothers offering to Moloch the smoking entrails of their own children; Iphigenia led by her father a sacrifice to the altar; the early Christians hurled from the summit of the capitol; Jews burned every year (twenty were burned in 1717 by Portuguese) for "not abandoning the faith of their forefathers." It showed religion used by ambitious chiefs as a pretext, but accepted by ignorant followers as the most real

of all possible causes of hostility. "To him who avenges the church all becomes legitimate: murder is just; it is authorized; nay, it is commanded by Heaven!" The poem dwells upon the doctors of divinity whose fierce and bloody lessons drive weak men mad, and make them the assassins of good kings; and upon "those priests whose fatal eloquence kindled the fires that had consumed France."

Apart from such passages as these, the spirit of the poem was secular, and its *morale* was that of the deism then in vogue, a system that had no room in it for priests. The very passages inserted to conciliate the censorship had offense in them; for if the author spoke of the Protestant doctrines as "error," he must needs add that "error, too, had its heroes." Enough; after some weeks of suspense the poet learned that the "privilege" would not be granted; and, consequently, all the arrangements hitherto made, in Holland and in France, were of no effect. He could not supply copies to his subscribers, nor "copy" to his Dutch printer; for it seems that his bargain with the publisher at the Hague was conditional upon his obtaining the privilege in France.

A French commentator upon these events judiciously remarks that Voltaire did not write a poem in nine or ten cantos for the purpose of keeping it in a portfolio. He resolved to print his poem and supply copies in Paris without a "privilege." As Alexis Piron had evaded with impunity a positive prohibition, so he, with the help of Thieriot, now set about eluding a negative one. Sixty eight miles from Paris, on the banks of the river Seine, is the city of Rouen, the chief abode of his landlord, M. de Bernières, where also lived M. de Cideville, another magistrate, a fellow-student at the Collège Louis-le-Grand, and ever since a faithful friend. There was much going to and fro this year between the Quai des Théatins at Paris and a certain printing-house at Rouen. Voltaire was at Rouen for a while; then Thieriot; then Voltaire again; then both. Such was the slowness of the old printers that it required five months to put the two hundred and thirty pages of the first edition in type; and, meanwhile, Thieriot in Paris was getting two thousand bindings ready against the arrival of the printed sheets. All was done with the utmost secrecy. The poem was spoken of in Voltaire's letters as *mon fils*, *mon*

bâtard, *mon petit bâtard*, and the bindings as "my two thousand jackets." Doubtless, Madame de Bernières, as well as M. de Cideville, assisted in the scheme; for it was at her house that Voltaire and Thieriot lived while they remained near Rouen. The dates are all in confusion here; but, happily, it is of no great consequence. We can discover, by long groping in the dim cross-lights, that, during a great part of 1723, this business of getting two thousand copies of "La Henriade" manufactured was a grand object with our impetuous and irresistible poet.

It was a business that left him many vacant hours, part of which he employed in writing a new tragedy, "Mariamne." The scene of this drama was laid in Palestine. Herod, the king, was the chief personage; and his young wife, Mariamne, was the innocent, suspected heroine. He toiled at this play with even more than his usual assiduity, in the hope of obliterating by it the memory of his dramatic failure in Artemire, some passages and incidents of which he employed in the new tragedy. In November he was to have an opportunity of hearing it read by Madame Lecouvreur, the first actress of her generation, before a company of great note and splendor at the Château de Maisons, in the forest of St. Germain, nine miles from Paris.

At this château he had been a frequent guest for considerable periods. The rooms in which he lived and wrote used to be shown to visitors long after his death. The remains of the château, one of the first built by Mansard, and occupied by a number of famous persons, show how capable it must have been of entertaining fine company in the early years of Louis XV. M. de Maisons, the young lord of the mansion, was accustomed to bring together those who practiced and those who enjoyed the arts; or, as the chronicles of the period have it, "all the arts, all the talents, and all the agreeablenesses." Voltaire was doubly welcome, as poet and as friend of Madame de Villars, who was a near relation of Madame de Maisons.

A grand three-days *fête* was announced for the early days of November, 1723, at the Château de Maisons, to which sixty lords and ladies were invited. The Abbé de Fleury, preceptor and favorite of the king, who was soon to be car-

dinal and minister, was expected. Plays were to be performed and concerts given; all the usual round of diversions and divertisements were to be presented; and, as a special entertainment, there was to be a formal reading of the new tragedy by Madame Lecouvreur, in the presence of the author. The 4th of the month had arrived. Madame Lecouvreur, the first lady of her profession, it is said, who ever associated on apparently equal terms with her sister artists, the grand ladies of the old *régime*, had reached the château. Voltaire arrived, and preparations for the festival were going forward. On that very day, November 4th, the lord of the castle and himself were indisposed. According to the usage of the time, they had themselves bled; which relieved the host, but not the guest.

After two days of fever, a slight eruption revealed, late at night, the dread malady of that century, the small-pox! The consternation was such that guests, roused from sleep, set off in the middle of the night for their homes. Couriers were dispatched to the Abbé de Fleury and other invited persons, warning them not to come. Madame Lecouvreur, with the proverbial kindness of her profession, sent an express to Rouen to call Thieriot from the printing of the poem to the bedside of the poet. M. de Maisons summoned Gervasi, the physician of Paris most noted for his successful treatment of this disease. We possess, from the pen of Voltaire, a curiously minute account of the treatment to which he was subjected on this occasion, as well as of the system in vogue, written in January, 1724, at the request of the aged Baron de Breteuil, father of that Marquise du Châtelet, with whom he was to be so intimately and so long connected. This epistle, one of the longest he ever wrote, is a valuable chapter for the historian of the healing art, though much too extensive for insertion here.

"The malady [wrote Voltaire] appeared after two days of fever, and revealed itself by a slight eruption. I had myself bled a second time, on my own responsibility, despite the popular prejudice. M. de Maisons had the goodness to send me the next day M. de Gervasi, physician to the Cardinal de Rohan, who visited me with reluctance. He feared to be engaged in treating uselessly, in a delicate and feeble constitution, the small-pox already at the second day

of the eruption, and the development of which had been hindered only by two insufficient bleedings, without any medicine.

"He came, nevertheless, and found me with a malignant fever. From the first, he had a bad opinion of my case; the servants who attended me perceived it, and did not permit me to remain in ignorance of it. They announced to me, at the same time, that the priest of the parish, who took an interest in my health, and who was not afraid of the small-pox, had inquired if he could see me without giving me inconvenience. I admitted him at once; I confessed; and I made my will, which, as you may well believe, was not very long. After that, I awaited death with sufficient tranquillity; regretting, however, to go without having put the last hand to my poem and to 'Mariamne,' and sorry to leave my friends so soon. Nevertheless, M. de Gervasi did not abandon me for a moment. He studied with attention all the movements of nature; he gave me nothing to take without telling me the reason of it; he let me partly see the danger, and showed me clearly the remedy. His reasonings carried conviction and confidence to my mind, — a method very necessary with a sick person, because the hope of cure is itself half a cure. Eight times he was obliged to make me take an emetic; and, instead of the cordials usually given in this disease, he made me drink two hundred pints of lemonade. This treatment, which will seem to you extraordinary, was the only one that could have saved my life, every other road conducting me to certain death; and I am persuaded that most of those who have died of this dreadful malady would be still alive if they had been treated as I was.

"Popular prejudice abhors, in cases of small-pox, bleeding and medicine. People wish nothing but cordials given; wine is administered to the sick man, and even broth. Error triumphs, from the fact that many persons recover under this regimen. People do not consider that the only cases of small-pox successfully treated in this manner are those which no fatal accident accompanies, and which are in no degree dangerous."

He continues to defend the bridge which had carried him over, and to pour forth expressions of gratitude to M. and Madame de Maisons, as well as to his devoted Thierot, who flew to him, post haste, as soon as he received Madame Lecouvreur's message, and remained with him till he recovered. On the eleventh day from his seizure he was out of danger; on the twelfth he wrote verses; on the twenty-sixth he was well enough to be removed to Paris, and thus relieve his generous friends from a presence which had cost them and their circle

so much inconvenience. His carriage had scarcely gone two hundred paces from the château when the floor of the room which he had occupied burst into flames from a charred beam under the fire-place; and before the fire was subdued damage was done to the extent of one hundred thousand francs. The château itself, one of the finest in Europe, was only saved by the help of engines brought from Paris.

The invalid did not hear of this calamity until the next morning. "I had the same grief," he wrote to the Baron, "as if I had been the guilty cause of it: the fever seized me again, and I assure you that at that moment I was not grateful to M. Gervasi for having saved my life." M. and Madame de Maisons, anticipating his feelings, wrote consoling letters to him, as if they had burned a château of his instead of his having occasioned damage to one of theirs.

Many months passed before he recovered his health; and, indeed, from this time to the end of his life, he was more liable than before to those indispositions and that feeling of bodily insufficiency to which literary men are liable.

A great joy was in store for him at the beginning of the new year, 1724, one of the keenest known to mortals. After a year of intrigue and suspense, after nine years of fitful, impassioned toil, copies of his poem were in existence! It only remained to get them from Rouen to Paris, — a difficult task under paternal government. Madame de Bernières, who had wagons and barges frequently going between the two cities, gave the conspirators her assistance; and so, at last, as if "by miracle," the great packages were got past the barriers, and safely housed somewhere in Paris. The public curiosity, the author's tact, Thieriot's zeal, and the coöperation of the elect did the rest; and early in the year 1724 copies began to circulate. The poem becoming a topic of conversation, it was a distinction to have seen a copy; then a merit to have read the work; until, at length, nobody's secret drawer was complete without it. Its success with the "reading public" of the day was immediate, immense, and universal; that is, it reached at once and strongly moved the few hundred persons, here and there in Europe, who shared the intellectual life of their generation. The very defects and faults of the work, which exclude it from the rank of the three or four immortal

epics, enhanced its effect upon French readers of that day. Hear the verdict of Mathieu Marais, old lawyer, a man prejudiced against this high-aspiring son of a notary. Marais did but give utterance to the general feeling when he wrote in his diary for February, 1724, the well known entry: —

"The poem of 'The League,' [so it was called in the first edition] by Arouet, of which so much has been said, is selling secretly. I have read it. It is a wonderful work, a masterpiece of the mind, as beautiful as Virgil; and behold our language in possession of an epic poem, as of other poetical works! I know not how to speak of it. There is everything in the poem. I cannot think where Arouet, so young, could have learned so much. It is like inspiration. What an abyss is the human mind! The surprising thing is that every part of the poem is temperate, well ordered, urbane; we find in it no crude vivacity, no merely brilliant passages, but everywhere elegance, correctness, happy turns, an eloquence simple and grand, — qualities belonging to mature genius, and nowise characteristic of the young man. Fly, La Motte, Fontenelle, and all of you, poets of the new style! From this marvelous poem, at once the glory and the shame of our nation, learn to think and to write!" [1]

From such contemporary notices as these it is evident that the similarity in form of "La Henriade" to the "Æneid," which sometimes makes the modern reader smile and the irreverent school-boy laugh, was part of its charm and an element of its power in 1724. These two poems frequently fill a corner of the same school-desk, and usually we come to the study of the French epic when we are somewhat familiar with the Latin one. The resemblances, merely external, but needlessly obvious, and very numerous, strike the unformed mind most forcibly, and are fatal to the effect of "La Henriade," as a whole, upon mature readers. Voltaire's second book, for example, is as different as possible in spirit from Virgil's second book, but in form it resembles it. In Virgil, Æneas recounts to Queen Dido the fall of Troy; in Voltaire, Henry of Navarre relates to Queen Elizabeth of England the civil wars of France. Voltaire himself assures us that he purposely modeled his sixth canto upon Virgil's sixth. The large ingredient of the supernatural in the "Æneid" we accept as readily as we do the ghost in "Hamlet;" but it re-

[1] 3 Mémoirs de M. Marais, 89.

pels in "La Henriade." We do not so much enjoy the long interview between the English queen and the French prince when we know that Henry of Navarre never crossed the Channel, nor looked upon Elizabeth's face. To the French reader of 1724 devices of that nature seemed legitimate, and, such was the ignorance of educated Frenchmen then of their own history, that most readers could accept the narrative as substantially true. "In my childhood," says Voltaire, "no one knew anything of Henry IV." Most readers of that generation brought to the perusal of this poem minds less acquainted with the great contest between Protestants and Catholics in France than with the condemnation of Socrates or the wars of Cæsar and Pompey.

The best office that literature renders a nation is to keep it vividly acquainted with its history, and to give that history its true interpretation. In publishing this poem, Voltaire did not add to the treasures of the human mind one more immortal epic; but he began the arduous work, not yet complete, of making France understand how it was that in the sixteenth century, when the nations came, one after another, to the parting of the ways, and had to choose between the upward and the downward road, France was prevented from making the right choice. There was more heat than light in the poem. The author of it had more heat than light. He felt, as few have ever felt, the evils that come to men from intolerant religion; but he could not, at that early day, regard intolerant religion merely as a mark of imperfect development: its cause, the ignorance and timidity of man; its cure, increase of knowledge and safer abundance.

The poem continued to make its way over Europe, receiving in due time all the honors: translation, imitation, suppression, papal anathema, piracy, parody, burlesque, general approval, and universal currency. A French bibliographer computes the sale in the first hundred and twenty-five years of its existence at 335,000 copies, in seven languages, — French, Italian, Latin, German, Russian, Dutch, and English.[1] "All the world is making epic poems," wrote Voltaire in 1725; "I have brought poems into fashion." Marais has a similar entry in his diary: "The poets write nothing but epics," — "Clovis,"

[1] Bibliographie Voltairienne, par J. M. Quérard, page 23.

in eight cantos, one of them. The career of the robber Cartouche, lately executed, was the subject of one parody. A poem called "La Demoniade," or magic unmasked, was another. A pirate printer published an edition in Holland, and got many copies into Paris. The police, when everybody had read the poem, and most collectors possessed it, hunted it down with such exemplary vigilance that it became at length as Marais records, *really* difficult to buy a copy, and finally, for a short time, impossible.

In the midst of his first elation, just as friends and subscribers were receiving their copies, and every hour brought to the author some new reminder of his glory, the new tragedy "Mariamne" was performed at the Théâtre Français for the first time. Monday, March 6, 1724, was the date. The theatre was crowded almost beyond precedent, the money taken amounting to five thousand five hundred and thirty francs. The part of the Queen of Palestine, the ill-starred Mariamne, was played by Madame Lecouvreur, the queen of the tragic stage. The author was present, with a crowd of his friends and admirers, many of whom had shed tears on hearing the play read. All went well until the middle of the third act, when King Herod enters for the first time upon the scene It is a risk to hold so long in reserve a chief character, whose entrance may not fulfill the expectation created. Molière ventures this in Tartuffe, and with success, for Tartuffe fills and holds the stage at every instant when he is visible. It was otherwise with a King Herod, who was as odious as Tartuffe, but not as interesting. "I perceived," says Voltaire, "the moment Herod appeared, that it was impossible the piece should succeed." The audience bore it, however, very good-naturedly, it seems, until near the close of the play, when the hapless queen lifts the cup of poison to her lips. A wag in the pit broke the silence of the moment by crying out, "THE QUEEN DRINKS!"

This was an allusion to the revels of Twelfth Night, familiar then to every auditor, at which a king and queen were chosen by lot; and whenever one of them lifted a flagon to drink this cry was raised, and a prodigious uproar ensued, in burlesque imitation of that ancient usage which Hamlet thought more honored in the breach than the observance:

"The king doth wake to-night, ... and, as he drains his draughts of Rhenish down, the kettle-drum and trumpet thus bray out the triumph of his pledge." "*La reine boit*," said the voice in the middle of the pit. The audience relieved its feelings by making the usual Twelfth Night uproar, and the rest of the play was performed in dumb show. The new tragedy had failed. The docile, indomitable author, agreeing with the audience, withdrew it from the theatre to alter and try it again. "The new tragedy," remarks Marais, "fell at the first representation. Dramatic poetry differs from epic, and one man has not all the talents."

CHAPTER XIX.

VOLTAIRE A COURTIER.

IMPORTANT events were occurring at court during these years. A virtuous woman was coming to preside over it, as if to give the *régime* another chance for its life. Kind death, in August, 1723, relieved France of Cardinal Dubois, debauchee of sixty-seven, who died cursing the surgeons for the pain they had given him in trying to prolong his shameful existence. By way of epitaph, the Duke of St. Simon gives the list of the eight rich benefices held by this consecrated sarcasm, worth 324,000 francs per annum, as well as of his civil posts, which yielded 250,000; to say nothing of his annual bribe from England of 960,000 more. Funereal ceremonies of the usual magnificence were held in Notre Dame, Cardinal de Noailles officiating; "but," says honest St. Simon, "there was no oration; *they dared not hazard it!*"[1]

They dared not, because the government of France was a despotism tempered by epigrams.

His master, the regent, followed him soon. In December of the same year, while sitting before the fire with the Duchess of Phalaris, one of his mistresses, chatting gayly enough with her before going in to the young king on business, the Duke of Orleans was seized with apoplexy, and died in half an hour. He was in the prime of his age, forty-nine, and owed his death wholly to sensual indulgences of all kinds, sustained with a continuity of excess of which no animal but man is capable, and few men besides Bourbons.

The person highest in rank after the Duke of Orleans was the Prince of Condé, then commonly styled the Duke of Bourbon, — an avaricious young man, not yet thirty-two, governed by his mistress, the Marquise de Prie. While the king, a boy of fourteen, was still in tears for his uncle's

[1] 19 Mémoires, 137.

sudden death, the Duke of Bourbon asked for the place of prime minister. The bewildered lad gave a nod of assent; and behold fair France the helpless prey of a reckless, fascinating woman! Such is personal government. In July, 1724, the king and court were the guests of the Duke of Bourbon at Chantilly, the magnificent seat of the Condés, twenty-four miles northeast of Paris, where there was a hunting-park of seven thousand acres, one of the finest in Europe. All that France had of splendid and alluring was gathered in that superb château, wherein the great Condé had loved to welcome the princes of the blood and the princes of the mind. The frequent presence of Racine, Boileau, and Molière had rendered this château a kind of classic edifice.

Strange to say, all these resounding events touched and nearly concerned our invalid poet. An intellectualized person of his temperament and constitution cannot undergo two bleedings, a course of medicine, two hundred pints of lemonade, and the small-pox without languishing a long time afterwards in ill health. In the summer of 1724, he fled from the noise of the Quai des Théatins and the hootings of the *parterre*, and accompanied the young Duke of Richelieu to Forges, twenty miles beyond Rouen, the waters of which were brought into repute by Cardinal de Richelieu in the reign of Louis XIII. To this day one of its springs is called "La Cardinale." Voltaire was much caressed at this time by the nobleman who bore the name rendered illustrious by the great statesman. We find him employed, in 1724, in selecting a "governor for the duke's pages," and choosing a young man of intelligence, noble birth, good appearance, a geometer, and "one every way suitable to pages." But the duke wanted a draughtsman, not a geometer, and thought the post beneath the merits of the candidate.

He improved in health at Forges, but not, as he thought, by drinking its acrid waters. "There is more vitriol," he wrote, "in a bottle of Forges water than in a bottle of ink; and, candidly, I do not believe that ink is so very good for the health." It was not indeed in his case, his passion for using it always making it difficult for him to regain lost vigor. Even here he was busy recasting "Mariamne," retouching "La Henriade," and writing, for one of his duke's *fêtes*, a one-

act comedy in verse, the agreeable and sprightly trifle called "L'Indiscret," read at Forges with drawing-room success. "Exact regimen," however, had its effect, and he was soon able, as he said, to think of something besides his bodily pains. "I am ashamed," he wrote to Madame de Bernières, "to present myself to my friends with a weak digestion and a downcast mind. I wish to give you only my beautiful days, and to suffer *incognito*."

A tragic event, which brought the royal festivities of Chantilly to an abrupt conclusion, detained him at Forges. The Duke of Richelieu and the Duke of Melun, while hunting one Saturday of this July in the great park of Chantilly, brought to bay a huge stag in a narrow defile, and the animal, in a blind fury, charged upon them. The Duke of Melun's horse, at the moment when he was trying to cross the stag, received in his side the full force of the blow, when horse, stag, and rider all fell together. The two sportsmen were alone. Richelieu rescued his friend from the struggling animals, staunched his bleeding wounds, and sustained him three quarters of an hour, until, the huntsmen coming up, the injured man was conveyed to the château. He lingered from Saturday afternoon until Monday morning at half past six, when he died in the Duke of Bourbon's arms, in the presence of all the court. The king instantly departed for Versailles, leaving death and desolation at this magnificent abode, where, until the accident, all had been adjusted and attuned to profuse and splendid hospitality. Richelieu, idle profligate as he was, was overwhelmed with sorrow. "I cannot abandon him in his grief," wrote Voltaire. He remained at Forges with the duke fifteen days longer, returning to Paris in September, where he lived at the Hôtel de Bernières "in solitude and suffering, relieving both by moderate labor."

A pleasing prospect of a long journey to new scenes rose before him in the month of his return to Paris. The Duke of Bourbon consoled the surviving Richelieu by appointing him ambassador to Vienna, and Voltaire hastened to get the place of ambassador's secretary for his comrade Thieriot, promising to follow him to Vienna as soon as he could work himself free of immediate literary engagements. "I told the duke," he wrote to Thieriot, "that, since I could not go so

soon to Vienna, I would send half of myself, and the other half would quickly follow;" adding that he cared little for the "titled minxes of the court," which he renounced forever, "through the weakness of his stomach and the force of his reason." Great was his disappointment when he received in reply to his exultant letter a note from Thieriot, dryly and disdainfully refusing the post, saying that he was not made to be the domestic of a great lord. Voltaire, upon whom the idle young duke had devolved the business of finding a secretary, offered the place to another, who accepted it. Then he wrote to Thieriot, patiently explaining and apologizing, upon which Thieriot accepted also.

Here was an embarrassment. But Voltaire, irascible, susceptible, impetuous, was patience itself whenever the matter in hand was to serve a friend. He exhibited Thieriot to the ambassador in a light so pleasing that, finally, rather than lose such a treasure, Richelieu agreed to take two secretaries. Then Thieriot, to his friend's extreme mortification, declined the post again. Voltaire, with wonderful moderation, wrote to him, "You have caused me a little trouble by your irresolution. You have made me give two or three different replies to M. de Richelieu, who believed that I was trifling with him. I heartily forgive you since you remain with us. I did too much violence to my feelings when I wished to tear myself from you in order to make your fortune. If the same principle of friendship which forced me to send you to Vienna hinders you from going thither, and if, besides, you are content with your destiny, I am sufficiently happy, and have nothing more to desire except better health." And so ended the first of a long series of attempts, on the part of Voltaire, to get some better footing in the world for this thriftless, agreeable companion of his youth. Thieriot objected mortally to steady toil and leaving Paris, and he passed a long life in ingeniously avoiding both.

The year 1725 brought various good fortune to Voltaire. His "Mariamne," recast, was played in April with respectable success, having eighteen successive representations, besides many occasional repetitions and short runs, during the year. His little comedy of court life, "L'Indiscret," was played with the tragedy as an afterpiece, with applause, and both were

printed and pirated in the usual way. He was obliged to print both plays at his own expense, because, as he wrote, "the pirate editions cut the publisher's throat." He was gaining with the public in many ways, and doubtless other Frenchmen said in conversation what Mathieu Marais entered in his diary in April, 1725, "Voltaire is the greatest poet we possess."

If the court had been as sensitive as the church to satire, the censor would not have given him the privilege of printing "L'Indiscret," which exhibits court life and character very much in the spirit of Beaumarchais's "Figaro." The hero is a court puppy, who loses his "adorable widow" by blabbing boastfully of his conquest. "Colonel at thirteen," remarks the indiscreet lover, "I think it but *reasonable* to expect a marshal's *bâton* at thirty." Many other Figaro strokes mark this comedy; but the *régime* felt itself invincible and invulnerable, and therefore the little comedy got afloat upon the current, to amuse and assist to form unborn Beaumarchais. The boxes, as Marais reports, were not too well pleased to find themselves so accurately delineated; but the play succeeded, notwithstanding. Voltaire was winning credit and celebrity, which, as he remarked, are agreeable, but not nourishing. It does not improve an author's fortune, nor his temper, to print his works at his own expense against pirated editions at home and abroad, — two of the "Henriade," three of "Mariamne," and one of "L'Indiscret."

But a great event was impending in the summer of 1725, full of hope to poets and artists in that age of patronage and pensions: nothing less than the marriage of the rude boy-king, whom the "titled minxes of the court" had tried in vain to seduce, so well had the Abbé de Fleury made him learn his catechism. Whom should he marry? A friend of our poet, and of all poets, pointed out the lady.

This *régime* of personal government in France could not have long maintained itself if it had been tempered by epigrams only. It was tempered and saved by solid merit and genuine ability, won from the uncorrupt classes. The incompetent young man styled the Duke of Bourbon, prime minister of the king, had for secretary and man of confidence one of the best business heads in Europe, Paris-Duverney, one of four

able brothers, sons of an innkeeper. He was antidote in France to the inflating adventurer, John Law, and saved his country more than once from the imbeciles who patronized such adventurers. Paris-Duverney it was who suggested the policy which gave to the French court for forty years the presence of the virtuous woman just alluded to. Voltaire, who records this fact, was connected with Paris-Duverney in various ways for half a century, and owed to him, ten years later, a vast increase of fortune. "It was Paris-Duverney," says Voltaire, "who conceived the idea of marrying the king to the daughter of Stanislas Leczinski."[1]

Both Stanislas and his daughter are characters in Voltaire's eventful story: the daughter at this period, the father at a later day.

Marie Leczinski, Queen of France from 1725 to 1768, makes her first appearance in history as an infant, twelve months old, lying at the bottom of a horse-trough in front of a village inn in Poland. She was the daughter of that young Stanislas whom Charles XII. placed upon the throne of Poland, after having driven from it its rightful occupant, Augustus the Strong. The reign of this young gentleman was short and troubled. Only a few days after his coronation, learning that he was about to be attacked by the dethroned king, he suddenly sent his family to a place of safety, under the guard of a faithful troop of soldiers. It was during this flight that the nurse of his daughter Marie, either from fatigue or terror, laid the child in the horse-trough and abandoned it to its fate. It was found the next morning by accident, and conveyed to its mother.

After reigning four years, King Stanislas, sharing in the misfortunes of the Swedish king, lost his crown, and became a wanderer over Europe. First he took refuge in Germany; then fled to Sweden; next he sought safety in Turkey; and finally established himself in one of the small German states, where he lived upon a small annuity which was irregularly paid. During these wanderings, which lasted many years, his daughter Marie grew to womanhood. She was a young lady of small stature and pleasing appearance, though not of striking beauty. Her education, conducted in part by her parents,

[1] Histoire du Parlement de Paris, chapter lxviii.

embraced several languages, as well as drawing and music, and she was reared in the pious habits inculcated by the Catholic religion. At the age of twenty she had as little prospect of being Queen of France as any young lady in Europe. One morning her father, entering the room where she was seated at work with her mother, said, in a joyful tone, —

"Let us kneel and thank God!"

"Father," said Marie, "are you recalled to the throne of Poland?"

"Ah, my daughter," was the reply, "Heaven is far more favorable to us than that. You are Queen of France!"

As he said these words he showed her the letter in which the prime minister of France asked her hand in marriage for the young king, Louis XV.

This remarkable change of fortune was as much a surprise to France and to Europe as it was to herself. When Louis XV. inherited the throne of France he was, as we have seen, a sickly boy, five years of age. This poor little life was all there was between France and the danger of civil war; since, if he died, the Bourbon King of Spain had claims to the throne, and those claims would have been resisted by other princes of the reigning house. It is difficult for an American citizen to realize the fond anxiety with which the French people watched the growth and listened to bulletins of the health of this little boy. When he was sick the churches filled with people, who, prostrate upon their knees, implored his restoration; and when he appeared in Paris, in improved health and vigor, the whole city rejoiced, and blazed into an illumination in the evening. The Duke of Orleans had made a match for him with a daughter of the King of Spain, when she was but three years of age and Louis eight. To make assurance doubly sure, the little princess was brought to Paris, where she was to reside until of suitable age for marriage; and there, indeed, she lived for several years. In the mean time, the boy-king had been growing up into a vigorous and muscular youth. When he was but fifteen years of age, one of his courtiers said to him, "Sire, your majesty is old enough to give a dauphin to France."

Upon this hint the ministry acted, and it was certainly a matter of the greatest importance to the kingdom that another

life should be interposed between France and civil war. But the Spanish princess, to whom the young king was solemnly pledged, was not yet eleven years of age, and Louis, from the moment of his first interview with her, had exhibited an aversion to her person. It was resolved, therefore, at the risk of mortally offending Spain, to send her home to Madrid, and look about Europe for another princess for the king's hand. By means of the French ministers resident at foreign courts, and by more private agents, a catalogue was drawn up of all the marriageable princesses in Europe, seventeen in number, with a description of the person, character, expectations, and religion of each. None of them, it appears, would quite answer the purpose. One came of a family in which madness was hereditary; another was a Protestant, and would object to be converted; another was already engaged; another was ill-looking; another was too young; another was of too little importance in the politics of Europe; another was said to be humpbacked; and another was suspected of being scrofulous. These objections being fatal to the pretensions of the seventeen, it occurred to the Duke of Bourbon's astute secretary that it would be a master stroke of policy to select a princess who would owe the throne entirely to that prince, and who would feel herself bound in common gratitude to exert all her influence in his favor.

It was this idea which led to the choice of Marie. When the news of the strange selection was buzzed about the court, one of the anti-Bourbon party spread the report that the Polish princess was subject to fits, which so terrified the ministry that they sent in haste a secret agent to the village in which Stanislas lived to inquire into the truth of the report. He sent home word that the lady had never had a fit, and was in all respects in sound condition for marriage. She was next accused of having something the matter with one of her hands, and this calumny was refuted by no less a person than the Cardinal de Rohan. All obstacles to the marriage being thus removed, the letter was written to which reference has already been made. Neither the father nor the daughter made the slightest objection to the match, although the princess was twenty-one and the king fifteen. Preparations for the marriage were made in the greatest haste. One of the secret

agents of the ministry sent a petticoat of the princess to Paris for the guidance of her dressmakers; also one of her gloves, and an old slipper for the benefit of her shoemaker. She was conveyed to Paris with all possible pomp and splendor, and the marriage was performed with the customary magnificence. The father of the bride took up his abode in one of the French provinces, where he lived to a great old age upon a munificent pension from the French government. Queen Marie appears to have been a truly estimable lady. Some sayings of hers which have come down to us do honor to her memory. The following, for example: "If there were no little people in the world, we should not be great, and we ought not to be great except for their sakes." "To boast of one's rank is to show that we are beneath our rank." "Good kings are slaves, and their people are free." "The treasures of the state are not ours; we have no right to spend in arbitrary gifts the money earned by the artisan and the laborer." "It is better to listen to those who cry to us from afar, 'Solace our misery,' than to those who whisper in our ears, 'Increase our fortunes.'"

It is pleasing to know that the object of the Duke of Bourbon in promoting this marriage was not accomplished. The Abbé de Fleury, preceptor to the king, had obtained that ascendency over the dull boy that belonged to his place and character. Whatever virtue and purity this king ever possessed he owed to his governess, Madame de Ventadour, and to this priest, a man at least free from the lower vices of the court and time. It is not saying much for the tutor, but so much may be said. For ten years Louis XV. lived decently with his wife; and, at a later period, when he was the most licentious king in Europe, he was never quite at ease in his conscience. He was liable to fits of alarm, if not of contrition. It is recorded of him — oh, wondrous fact! — that he could not, with a good conscience, in his most debauched period go to bed without first kneeling down and saying his prayers! Such is the power and such is the impotence of early drill in pious observances! The coming of the good queen was followed within a few months by the abrupt dismissal of the Duke of Bourbon and his scandalous, extravagant De Prie. The virtuous, frugal, cautious Cardinal de Fleury ruled France for twenty years. The reign of mistresses was suspended for

a while; the court was comparatively decent; expenditure was curtailed; a policy of peace was maintained; and France had another chance of escaping revolution by reform. Cardinal de Fleury was not a Richelieu; but, in the circumstances, he was, perhaps, as good and as great a minister as could have kept the place.

In the festivities of this royal marriage Voltaire took part, and it was the Marquise de Prie who gave him the opportunity. During the summer of 1724 he had paid court to her, as all the world in that century paid court to the woman who governed the man who governed the state. He sent her a copy of "L'Indiscret," with an epistle in verse, in which he assured her that if the adorable widow of his comedy had possessed *her* beauty the hero's blabbing would have been pardonable; for what lover would not have been tempted to speak of such a mistress, either by excess of vanity or excess of tenderness! He had his reward. Madame de Prie, before leaving Paris, gave him an order upon the door-keeper of her house at Fontainebleau, where the honeymoon was to be passed, assigning him rooms therein. "I shall see the marriage of the queen," he wrote to Madame de Bernières. "I shall compose verses for her, if she is worth the trouble. I would rather write verses for you, if you loved me." In September, therefore, with all the gay and splendid world of France, he was first at Versailles, then at Fontainebleau, bearing his part in the marriage festival, sometimes as poet, sometimes as spectator, always as expectant.

One incident, interesting to Americans, made such an impression on his mind that he mentions it three or four times in his works: "In 1725 I saw four savages who had been brought from the Mississippi to Fontainebleau. Among them was a woman, ash-colored like her companions, whom I asked, through their interpreter, whether she had ever eaten human flesh. 'Yes,' she replied, very coolly, as to an ordinary question." Writing thirty years after, he adds: "I appeared a little scandalized, when she excused herself by saying that it was better to eat a dead enemy than to let the wild beasts eat him; the conquerors ought to have the preference."[1] It was a spectacle of extreme curiosity to the

[1] Essai sur les Mœurs, chap. cxlvi., and Dict. Philos., article Anthropophages.

French of 1725, the Indian lodge in the park of Fontainebleau; and to no one more interesting than to this bored poet.

He passed three tedious, laborious months at court; and his letters of the period show that, courtier as he was, and suitor of court favor, he felt all the ridicule of the situation, the unspeakable absurdity of the *régime* of which he desired to make part. I select a few sentences: —

[At Versailles, just before the marriage.] "Every one here pays court to Madame de Beseuval, who is a distant relation of the queen. This lady, who has some *esprit*, receives with much modesty the marks of baseness which are given her. I saw her yesterday at the house of Marshal de Villars. Some one asked her what relation she was to the queen. She replied that queens have no relations. These nuptials of Louis XV. are an injury to poor Voltaire. They talk of not paying the pensions, and even of not preserving them; but in recompense a new tax is to be imposed, to buy laces and fabrics for Mademoiselle Leczinska. This is like the marriage of the sun, which made the frogs murmur. I have been but three days at Versailles, and already I wish myself out of it."

[Fontainebleau, September 17th, after the marriage.] "Two noblemen died to-night. Assuredly, both of them took their time ill; for in the midst of all the hullabaloo of the king's marriage, their deaths made not the least sensation. . . . . Every one here is enchanted with the queen's goodness and politeness. The first thing she did after her marriage was to distribute among the princesses and ladies of the palace all the magnificent trifles which they call her *casket*, consisting of jewels of every kind except diamonds. When she saw the casket wherein they were placed she said, 'This is the first time in my life that I have been able to make presents.' She had on a little rouge on her wedding-day, — as much as was necessary to keep her from looking pale. She fainted a moment in the chapel, but only for form's sake. There was comedy the same day. I had prepared a little divertisement, which M. de Mortemart [first gentleman] was not willing to have executed. They gave in its place 'Amphytryon' and Molière's 'Le Médecin Malgré Lui,' which did not seem too suitable. After supper there were fire-works of very little ingenuity or variety. . . . . For the rest, there is a confusion here, a pressure, a tumult, that are frightful. During these first days of hubbub I shall avoid having myself presented to the queen. I shall wait until the crowd has subsided, and her majesty has recovered a little from the bewilderment caused by all this *sabbat*. Then I shall try to have

'Œdipe' and 'Mariamne' played before her. I shall dedicate both to her; and she has already sent me word that she would be very willing I should take that liberty. The king and queen of Poland (for here we no more recognize King Augustus) have sent to ask me for the poem of Henry IV., which the queen has already heard spoken of with eulogium. But nothing must be pressed."

[To Madame de Bernières, October 8th.] "I have not a moment to myself. We have had to perform 'Œdipe,' 'Mariamne,' and 'L'Indiscret.' I have been some time at Belébat with Madame de Prie. Besides that, I have been almost always in agitation, cursing the life of a courtier, vainly chasing a little good fortune which seemed to present itself to me, and which fled as soon as I thought I had it; in ill humor, and not daring to show it; seeing many ridiculous things, and not daring to speak of them; not ill with the queen; much in favor with Madame de Prie, — and all that doing nothing for me, except making me lose my time and keeping me from you. . . . . Oh, madame, I am not in my element here. Have pity upon a poor man who has abandoned his country for a foreign land. Insensate that I am! In two days I set out to see King Stanislas; for there is no folly of which I am incapable."

[To Thieriot, October 17th.] "I have had the folly to abandon my talents and my friends for the illusions of the court, for expectations purely imaginary. . . . I have been very well received here by the queen. She has shed tears at the performance of 'Mariamne,' and she has laughed at 'L'Indiscret.' She speaks to me frequently; she calls me 'My poor Voltaire.' A fool would be content with all that; but unfortunately I have sense enough to feel that praise is of small account, that the *rôle* of a poet at court has always something in it a little ridiculous, and that it is not permitted to any one to be in this country of ours without some kind of status. Every day they give me hopes, which yield me little nourishment. You would hardly believe, my dear Thieriot, how tired I am of my court life. Henry IV. is very foolishly sacrificed to the court of Louis XV. I mourn the moments which I take away from him. The poor child already ought to have appeared in quarto, on fine paper, with a fair margin and handsome type. That will surely be done this winter, whatever happens. Epic poetry is my forte, or I am much deceived. . . . . All the poets in the world, I believe, have come together at Fontainebleau. The queen is every day assassinated with Pindaric odes, sonnets, epistles, and marriage songs. I imagine she takes the poets for the court fools; and if so she is very right, for it is a great folly for a man of letters to be here, where he neither gives nor receives pleasure."

But at length, November 13th, he wrote in a more cheerful strain, and had an item of good news to communicate to his friends: "The queen has just given me from her privy purse a pension of fifteen hundred livres, which I did not solicit. This is a first step toward obtaining the things which I do ask. I am in good credit with the second prime minister, M. Paris-Duverney. I count upon the friendship of Madame de Prie. I begin to have a reasonable hope of being able sometimes to be useful to my friends."

He was now past thirty years of age. He had published a poem which the intelligent mind of his country had sealed with its warm approval. He had written three tragedies, two of which had succeeded upon the stage, had been read all over Europe with pleasure, and remain at this day part of the classic literature of his country. He had composed a hundred agreeable poems: some a little free, as the manner of that age was, many of them both pleasing and meritorious. He had written a graceful comedy, which, trifling as it was, had given innocent pleasure to more persons than one of the grand seigneurs of the period could rationally expect to please in a life-time of fourscore years. He had within him undeveloped capacities from which good works were to be hoped. All these things he had done; all this and more he was, in December, 1725, when he returned from court to Paris with his little pension in his pocket, and hope in his heart of greater things to follow. Besides his personal merits and his solid claims, he possessed artificial advantages, such as the favor of the queen, of her father, of the prime minister's mistress and secretary, as well as a wide acquaintance with the grandees of the kingdom. What was he, then? What human rights had he in his native land? Was he anvil at thirty, or was he hammer? If, on this subject, he had cherished any vainglorious doubts, he was now to be rudely and finally undeceived. He was to discover that he was nobody in France; or, as Alexis Piron expressed it, "nothing, not even an Academician."

CHAPTER XX.

IN THE BASTILLE AGAIN.

At the opera in Paris, one evening in December, 1725, Voltaire was conversing with acquaintances in the lobby between the acts; perhaps "laying down the law" with some positiveness, as was his right. Who should lay down the law of the drama if not he? Among the by-standers was the Chevalier de Rohan, a member of historic families which had given to France cardinals, generals, dukes, princes, and ministers in every century since the kingdom was consolidated. A Cardinal de Rohan was a personage of weight and splendor at that time, predecessor of the Cardinal de Rohan who figured sixty years later in the affair of the diamond necklace. This chevalier, forty-three years of age, a dissolute man-about-town, broke into the conversation in an insolent tone, saying, —

"Monsieur de Voltaire, Monsieur Arouet, what *is* your name?"

The answer which the poet made on this occasion is not recorded, nor whether he made any. Two days after, he was at the theatre, and there again he met the Chevalier de Rohan, — either in the warming-room (*le chauffoir*) or in the box of the actress Madame Lecouvreur, who was present. The chevalier repeated the offensive question, when Voltaire replied,—

"I do not trail after me a great name, but I know how to honor the name I bear."

Another version is, "I begin my name; the Chevalier de Rohan finishes his."

Rohan raised his cane as if to strike; Voltaire placed his hand upon his sword; the actress fainted; and thus the scene was brought to an end, Voltaire the victor. Two or three days after, the poet was dining with his old patron and

protector, the Duke of Sully, when a servant came to his chair, and informed him that some one wished to speak to him at the door of the mansion. The Hôtel de Sully, where these events occurred still stands, and bears the number 143 Rue Saint-Antoine. Upon reaching the street, he saw two hackney-coaches standing near. Two men came up to him, and asked him to stand upon the steps of the nearest carriage, which he was proceeding to do, supposing that the person who desired to speak to him was in that vehicle. At the moment when his foot touched the step, he was seized by the coat, and a shower of blows fell upon his shoulders. A voice from the other coach was heard, crying out,—

"Don't hit him upon the head! Something good may come out of that."

Voltaire recognized the voice as that of the Chevalier de Rohan, whom he saw sitting in the coach, watching and directing the proceedings. Indeed, the brave knight, in relating the exploit to his intimates, would say, "I was in command of the laborers" (*les travailleurs*), using the military term for the men detailed to throw up intrenchments. Voltaire at length tore himself from the clutch of the hired ruffians, and made his way back to the dining-room, where he related what had occurred. He asked the Duke of Sully to make common cause with him in obtaining legal redress for an outrage done upon his guest, at his own door, and therefore an affront to the master of the house. He besought the duke, at least, to go with him to a commissary of police, and depose to the facts within his knowledge. Rohan was cousin to the duke, and it now appeared that the Duke of Sully was neither aristocrat enough nor man enough to seize this chance of honoring his order and himself. He refused to stand by his guest. Voltaire rushed from the hôtel, never again to enter an abode where, for nearly ten years, he had been on the footing almost of a younger brother.

He hurried away to the opera, where he found Madame de Prie, the mistress of the Duke of Bourbon, not yet deposed from the ministry, though soon to be. To her he related the unspeakable wrong he had suffered. She sympathized with him, took his part with the minister, and, for a few days, they hoped the Duke of Bourbon would do him some kind of jus-

tice. But, it seems, a friend of the Rohans neutralized the influence of the mistress by showing the one-eyed duke an epigram, addressed to Madame de Prie, and falsely attributed to Voltaire, which ran thus: "Io, without seeming to feign, knew how to deceive all the hundred eyes of Argus. We have only one eye to fear; why not be happy?" Nor was the minister so firm in his seat at that moment that he could safely offend so powerful a family as the Rohans. It was soon manifest that the injured man had nothing to expect from the court, and if ever his wrong was avenged it must be by his own hand or arm. Meanwhile, the secret police received orders to keep an eye upon both knight and poet, and to take measures for preventing a renewal of strife between them. The language of these orders shows what the great world thought of the affair.

The lieutenant of police to the commissary of detectives, March 23, 1726: "Sir, His Royal Highness is informed that Monsieur the Chevalier de Rohan sets out this day; and, as he may have some new procedure [*procédé*] with the Sieur de Voltaire, or the latter commit some madcap act (*coup d'étourdi*), he desires you to have them observed in such a way that nothing of the kind may happen." [1]

The lieutenant of police uses the polite word *procédé* when anticipating the conduct of a Rohan, and the contemptuous phrase *coup d'étourdi* when describing the probable behavior of Voltaire. He was not far wrong. For a private person without powerful protection to attempt, in 1726, to get justice against an adversary closely allied to princes in church and state was indeed the act of an *étourdi*. This valiant chevalier never received the slightest reprimand for his conduct in this affair, nor was his promotion in the army retarded by it. At this time he held a rank equivalent to brigadier-general, and, within ten years, without having performed or witnessed any warlike exploit but this battle with a poet, he rose to the rank of lieutenant-general. Nor is there reason to think that the outrage excited indignation in the public mind. Epigrams and other versified satire then played the part which scurrilous newspapers have since occasionally filled in our large cities. We do not at present get into a passion of noble wrath

[1] Jeunesse de Voltaire, page 353.

when the irrepressible editor of such a newspaper is assailed either in his pocket or in his person. Voltaire, in all his literary career of sixty years, rarely wrote ill-natured verse, and never except under strong provocation ; but, unfortunately, he had the credit of half the stinging satire that circulated in his early time. "We should be unhappy, indeed," said the Bishop of Blois, when he heard of this affair, "if poets had no shoulders." There is a lurking baseness in many minds which compels them to side always with the man who is at the comfortable end of the stick. Six weeks after the outrage, Advocate Marais wrote to a correspondent : —

"I send you a piece of verse all fresh against M. de Fontenelle. It is very malign, — worse than blows with a cane. Those of Voltaire are spoken of no more. He keeps them. People remember the reply of the late Duke of Orleans when Voltaire asked for justice on a similar occasion : '*You have had it.*' . . . . The poor Beaten shows himself as often as he can at court, in the city ; but no one pities him, and those whom he thought to be his friends have turned their backs upon him. The rumor runs that the poet Roy has also had his basting (*bastonnade*) for an epigram. And so, at last, behold our poets, through fear of the stick, reduced to their legitimate work of learning and pleasing." [1]

Thus the commonplace man interprets an affair of this nature ; and, doubtless, all that was ordinary and all that was mean in the idle Paris of that day commented so upon the enormous, the inexpiable wrong done upon the man destined to give his name to his era. Doubtless, too, the gift of witty utterance was abused, and epigrams themselves sometimes needed "tempering." "What is the common price of an oak stick, sir?" said Dr. Johnson to Davies. "Sixpence." "Why, then, sir, give me leave to send your servant for a shilling one. I'll have a double quantity, for I am told Foote means to take me off, as he calls it, and I am determined he shall not do it with impunity." Foote was notified, and forbore to take off Dr. Johnson.

Paris was very familiar at that time with the appeal to the stick in disputes between the owners and the movers of the world. Marais alludes to the poet Roy's mishap. The Count

[1] 3 Marais, 393.

de Clermont having been elected one of the forty members of the French Academy, Roy had taken the liberty of saying that thirty-nine plus zero had never yet made forty. This harmless joke subjected him to blows. The illustrious Molière, after the production of his Misanthrope, passed several days in expectation of similar treatment from a person supposed to have been represented in the play. He knew well that he had no protection, and could obtain no redress, from the law. Moncrif, for some jests in his "History of Cats," was assailed by blows in the streets. Advocate Barbier relates an incident of 1721, to this effect: The Duke de Meilleraie, a fool and an *étourdi*, while driving his phaeton over one of the narrow bridges of Paris, was in danger of running down a horse carrying in a *panier* several little children. A priest who was passing remonstrated; whereupon the duke sprang to the ground and "gave him twenty strokes with his whip." The priest, through his superior, complained. The Prince de Rohan, the duke's father-in-law, tried to pacify him; but he demanded reparation, and, being a priest, obtained it. The offending nobleman was obliged to apologize in the presence of all the priests of the convent, to settle upon the injured man an annuity of two hundred francs, and to pass a year in the château of Vincennes. No man of letters, unconnected with the privileged orders, could have had such redress. So many men of letters were subjected to outrage of this nature in that age that the records have furnished M. Victor Fournel with the material for a volume upon the "Rôle of the Stick in Literary History." Literature had to make its way in France between the cudgel and the Bastille, after it had outlived the period of the wheel and the fagot.

In such a time, in such a country, what ought Voltaire to have done? He must have read the song circulated in March, 1726, in which he was said to have been brevetted *batonnier*, staff-bearer to his regiment. He probably heard of the verb newly added to the French language, *voltairiser*, *to voltaire*, *to beat*. What should he have done? I cannot answer the question. To have submitted in silence to such an infamy he must have been either more or less than man. He was neither. To have taken "wild justice," as Lord Bacon expresses it, by putting to death the poor creature who had

wronged him, would have involved the spoiling, if not the loss, of his own life. He could have taken a frightful vengeance by his pen, as he often did when the injury was less; but on this occasion he felt the outrage too keenly to give his feelings effective expression. Effective expression is *art*, and the artist must have a tranquil mind. Othello was the man in the world who was farthest from being able either to write or to play the Moor of Venice. As to the courts of justice, had he not tried them in the case of Captain Beauregard, and involved himself in endless expense and trouble, only to remain in the thoughtless mind "the man who had got himself caned"?

He resolved to challenge Rohan to mortal combat with the sword, a weapon which he had worn for many years, and knew how to use about as well as a poet of the present time knows how to box. The equalizing pistol was not then employed on "the field of honor." He now abstained from his usual haunts, took lessons in fencing, and sought the advice of men learned in the art of polite combat, not suspecting that he was under surveillance of the police. He was determined not to throw away his life by going to the field too soon, and, accordingly, he spent nearly four months in acquiring skill with his weapon.

April 16, 1726, the lieutenant of police sent important information to his chief: —

"The Sieur de Voltaire intends to insult the Chevalier de Rohan immediately, and with *éclat*. Several times during the last six weeks he has changed both his residence and his quarter. We have information that he is now at the house of one Leynault, a fencing-master, Rue St. Martin, where he lives in very bad company. It is said that he is in relations with some soldiers of the guards, and that several bullies [*bretteurs*] frequent his lodgings. Whatever truth there may be in these last reports, it is certain that he has very bad designs, and it is sure also that he has had one of his relations [Daumart] come from the country, who is to accompany him in the combat. This relation is a more moderate man than M. de Voltaire, and desires to calm him, but it is impossible. He is more irritated and more furious than ever in his conduct and in his conversation. All this intelligence determines the lieutenant to put the king's orders into execution, if possible, this very night, judging it to be his duty to prevent the disorder of which he has been distinctly notified."

That evening, or the next, Voltaire and Thieriot were at the Théâtre Français, and observed that the Chevalier de Rohan was, as usual, in the box of Madame Lecouvreur. During the evening, they went to the door of the box, which Voltaire entered, leaving Thieriot outside, within hearing. As Thieriot used to tell the story in old age, Voltaire addressed Rohan thus: —

"Monsieur, if some affair of interest has not made you forget the outrage of which I have to complain, I hope that you will give me satisfaction for it."

The chevalier accepted the challenge, naming time and place, — St. Martin's Gate, the next morning at nine. But the next morning at nine Voltaire was in the Bastille. He was arrested, as it appears, after the scene in the box, either near the theatre or at his lodgings. It is certain that he awoke on the morning of April 18, 1726, within the château of the Bastille, a guest of the king, and so missed his appointment. He was provided, according to the official report, with pocket pistols at the time of his arrest; evidently an *étourdi* of desperate character. Two respectable families were relieved by the *lettre de cachet* which deprived Voltaire of his weapons and his liberty, the Rohans and the Arouets. The lieutenant of police remarked, in his report of the arrest, that "the family of the prisoner applauded unanimously *and* universally the wisdom of an order which kept the young man from committing some new folly, and the worthy persons of whom that family was composed from the mortification of sharing the confusion of it."

Considering all the circumstances, the arrest was, perhaps, the kindest thing such a government could have done, and it probably gratified every person who really wished well to the prisoner. The measure, among other effects, brought about a reaction of public feeling in his favor. The veteran soldier, the Duke of Villars, so often in later years the host and familiar correspondent of Voltaire, records in his Mémoires that the public now censured, and, as he thought, justly censured, all parties: Voltaire, for having offended the Chevalier de Rohan; the chevalier, for having committed a crime worthy of death, in causing a citizen to be beaten; the government, for not punishing a notoriously bad action, and for

having the beaten man put into the Bastille to tranquilize the beater."[1]

This was probably the general feeling at the moment. The chevalier was evidently held in odium, and the belief was general, though mistaken, that Voltaire had been arrested at the solicitation of the Rohans, who gave out that the chevalier, being lame from a fall, was not in fighting trim. A report was also circulated that the poet, in the violence of his rage, had gone to Versailles and asked for the chevalier at the very door of the Cardinal de Rohan's august abode! The captive, upon being established once more at the grim château, wrote to the minister in charge of the Department of Paris a spirited and not unbecoming note: —

"The Sieur de Voltaire very humbly represents that he was assaulted by the brave Chevalier de Rohan, assisted by six hamstringers, behind whom he was boldly posted; that ever since he has constantly sought to repair, not his own honor, but that of the chevalier, which has proved too difficult. If he went to Versailles, it is most untrue that it was for the purpose of asking for the Chevalier de Rohan at the house of the Cardinal de Rohan. It is very easy for the Sieur de Voltaire to prove the contrary, and he consents to remain in the Bastille the rest of his life, if he deceives on this point. He asks permission to take his meals at the table of the governor of the Bastille, and to be allowed to receive visitors. With still more earnestness he requests permission to go at once to England. If there is any doubt of his desire to depart thither, an officer can go with him as far as Calais."

The minister was complaisant. An order was at once sent to the Bastille, in the king's name, to the effect that the prisoner should have every liberty and privilege consistent with his safe-keeping. He dined at the governor's table, with other favored guests of the king. His friends, roused by his captivity, flocked in to see him in such numbers that the minister was alarmed, and sent a new order, limiting his visitors to six, to be designated by the prisoner. Thieriot dined with him almost every day, and brought him English books, which he studied diligently. An old clerk of his father was much with him, arranging affairs of business. Madame de Berni-

[1] 23 Mémoires, 323.

ères and other ladies of his circle shone in upon him, now and then. Among the prisoners, also, were agreeable persons, male and female. And so the days passed in business, in conversation, in eager study of the English language; not without occasional passionate outbursts against the injustice of which he was a victim. He asked the lieutenant of police, one day, —

"What is done with people who forge *lettres de cachet?*"

"They are hanged," was the reply.

"It is always well done," said Voltaire, "in anticipation of the time when those who sign genuine ones shall be served in the same way."[1]

His captivity on this occasion lasted fifteen days. Arrested April 17th, he was released May 2d, on condition of binding himself to go at once to England. But the minister did not rely upon his promise; for Condé, the chief turnkey of the Bastille, was ordered "to accompany him as far as Calais, and to see him embark and set sail from that port." The prisoner sent this news to Madame de Bernières, and asked her to lend him her traveling carriage for the journey, and to come at once to see him, for the last time, with Madame du Deffand and Thieriot. "To-morrow, Wednesday," he wrote to her, "all who wish to see me can enter freely. I flatter myself that I shall have the opportunity of assuring you once more in my life of my true and respectful attachment." May 3d he entered the chaise at the Bastille gate, with Condé, and was driven, in two days, to Calais, where good friends entertained him four days, while he was waiting for the sailing of the packet. He embarked, at length, and saw his native land recede from view.

His powerful friends at Paris did not forget him. Some weeks after his departure from the Bastille, the Count de Morville, minister for foreign affairs, who had been much his friend for several years, interposed in his behalf. The Walpoles were then supreme in England: Sir Robert being prime minister, his eldest son a new peer, his brother Horace ambassador at the French court, and as noted in the diplomacy of that generation as his nephew and namesake of Strawberry Hill was in the society of the next. "Old Horace

[1] 4 Œuvres de Voltaire, 122.

Walpole," at the instance of Count de Morville, wrote, May 29, 1726, a letter, commending the exile to Bubb Dodington, a gentlemen of great estate, fond of gathering men of letters under his roof: —

"Dear Sir, — Mr. Voltaire, a French poet, who has wrote several pieces with great success here, being gone for England in order to print by subscription an excellent poem, called Henry IV., which, on account of some bold strokes in it against persecution and the priests, cannot be printed here; M. de Morville, the Mæcenas, or, I may truly say, the Dodington here, for the encouragement of wit and learning, has earnestly recommended it to me to use my credit and interest for promoting this subscription among my friends; on which account, as well as for the sake of merit, I thought I could apply myself nowhere more properly than to you; and I hope this will answer the particular view and interest which I have in it myself, which is to renew a correspondence so agreeable to me; who am, with the greatest truth and affection, sir, your most obedient and most humble servant, H. Walpole."

There were circumstances in the politics of the moment which made the Walpoles particularly desirous of obliging Count de Morville. This letter therefore opened to the poet the great whig houses of the kingdom, while his acquaintance with Bolingbroke gave him favorable access to tory circles. He knew, as yet, very little English; but at that time, George I. being King of England, French was the language of the court, and during a part of every season a company of French comedians performed in London, — "the French vermin," Aaron Hill called them in 1721.

Voltaire was going to a very foreign land, farther then from France than Australia is now from the United States; a land less known to Frenchmen of that day than any land on earth now is to us. It was the time, too, when French and English accepted the theory that, being neighbors, only twenty-one miles apart, and having more reasons to be friends than any other two nations on the globe, they were "natural enemies." At least, such was the conviction of the average English mind. "We can do without the English coming among us," wrote Advocate Marais, in 1725, "for they do not love us, and are very haughty with us, notwithstanding our politeness and our civility." Happily, the educated classes of every land have

many dear interests in common, and some of them get above the grosser provincial prejudices. J. B. Rousseau had been in England in 1721, and found there subscribers enough to a quarto edition of his poems to put into his pocket a profit of five hundred pounds sterling.[1]

Voltaire, as his letters show, carried with him across the channel a heart filled with bitterness and rage. The indignity he had received was one of those which even commonplace men bear with equanimity only when they are suffered by others. He could not get over it. The wrong was too recent, and it came upon him with the force of accumulation; for this was the second time that he had been obliged to endure it. Satiric poets of the day insisted that it was the third time, and they did not neglect to repeat the statement whenever opportunity invited. Could he ever live in France on the principle that, as often as he suffered gross indignity, it was to be himself who should receive the stigma of public punishment, while the man who had committed the outrage showed himself nightly, in agreeable and distinguished boxes at the theatre, complacent and boastful? Could he ever frequent the haunts of men, bearing upon his person a label, legible to every passer-by, THIS IS THE MAN WHO MAY BE BEATEN!

[1] 42 Nouvelle Biographie Générale, 734.

CHAPTER XXI.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS OF ENGLAND.

ENGLAND gave the exile a smiling welcome. The account which he afterwards wrote of his arrival and of his first impressions of the country must not be taken quite literally. There is evidently that mingling in it of fact, fancy, and banter which he was often obliged to employ in treating ticklish subjects in the land of the Bastille, and which became at length habitual with him. Instead of landing at Dover, as travelers usually did, he sailed, as it appears, up the Thames as far as Greenwich, five miles below London, and there he first set foot on British soil.

It was one of the most beautiful days of May. The sky, he records, was without a cloud, and a soft breeze from the west tempered the sun's heat, and disposed all hearts to joy. It chanced also to be the day of the great Greenwich Fair, which was then a day of festivity to Londoners, who came in crowds to witness games, races, and regattas. The river was covered, he says, with two rows of merchant-ships for the space of six miles, with their sails all spread to do honor to the king and queen, who were upon the river in a gilded barge, preceded by boats with bands of music, and followed by a thousand wherries, each rowed by two men in breeches and doublet, with large silver plates upon their shoulders. "There was not one of these oarsmen," remarks the stranger, "who did not assure me, by his face, his dress, and his excellent condition [*embonpoint*] that he was a freeman, and lived in plenty."

Near the river, in Greenwich Park, four miles in circumference, he observed a prodigious number of well-formed young people on horseback, cantering around a race-course marked with white posts. Among them were women, who galloped up and down with much grace. But he was es-

pecially pleased with the girls on foot, most of whom were clad in Indian stuffs Many of them were beautiful; all were well made; and there was a neatness in their dress, a vivacity in their movements, and an air of satisfaction in their faces that made them all pleasing. Roaming about the Park, he came to a smaller race-course, not more than five hundred feet long. "What is this for?" he asked. He was told that this was for a foot-race, while the larger course was for horses. Near one of the posts of the large circle was a man on horseback holding in his hand a silver pitcher, and at the end of the smaller course were two poles, with a large hat at the top of one, and a chemise floating like a flag from the other. Between the two poles stood a stout man bearing a purse. The pitcher, he learned, was the prize for the horse-race, and the purse for the foot-race. But what of the hat and the chemise? He was "agreeably surprised" to be told that there was to be a race by the girls, and that the winner was to receive, besides the purse, the chemise, "as a mark of honor," while the winning man was to have the hat.

Continuing his rambles, he had the good fortune to fall in with some English merchants to whom he had letters of introduction. These gentlemen, he says, did the honors of the festival with the eagerness and the cordiality of men who are happy themselves, and wish to make others sharers in their joy. They had a horse brought for him; they sent for refreshments; and took care to get him a place whence he could comfortably view the races, the river, and vast London in the distance. At first he thought himself transported to the Olympic Games; but when he beheld the beauty of the Thames, the fleets of ships, the immensity of London, he "blushed to have compared Greece with England." Some one told him that at that very moment there was a "combat of gladiators" in progress at London; and then he thought he was with the ancient Romans. Near him on the stand was a Danish courier, who had only arrived that morning, and was to set out on his return in the evening. "He appeared to me," says Voltaire, "overcome with joy and wonder. He believed that this nation was always gay, that the women were all beautiful and animated, that the sky of

England was always clear and serene, that people there thought only of pleasure, and that every day in the year was like this. He went away without being undeceived. For my part, I was more enchanted even than my Dane."

Such were his first hours in England. Ben Franklin was a journeyman printer in London then. What more likely than that he was at Greenwich that day? He may have brushed past the eager Frenchman, whom he was to meet in such singular circumstances fifty-two years after. He may have been one of the stout, well-dressed, fresh-complexioned youths whom Voltaire admired galloping about in the Park; for at Greenwich Fair many young fellows rode who trudged the rest of the year on foot.

Voltaire was not long in learning that England was not always clad in smiles. He was in London the same evening, probably at the house of Lord Bolingbroke, which was usually the place of his abode in London, and to which his letters from France were addressed.

In the course of his first evening, as he relates, he met some ladies of fashion. He spoke to them of the "ravishing spectacle" which he had witnessed at Greenwich, not doubting that they also had witnessed it, and had formed part of the gay assemblage of ladies galloping round the course. He was a little surprised, however, to observe that they had not that air of vivacity which people usually exhibit who have just returned from a day's pleasure. On the contrary, they were constrained and reserved, sipped their tea, made a great noise with their fans, talked scandal, played cards, or read the newspaper. At length, one of these fine ladies, "more charitable than the rest," informed the puzzled foreigner that people of fashion never abased themselves so far as to attend miscellaneous gatherings like the one which had given him so much delight; that all those pretty girls, clad in the fabrics of India, were only servants and villagers; that those handsome young men, so well mounted, and cantering so gayly in the Park, were nothing but scholars and apprentices on hired horses. These unexpected statements he could not believe, and he felt himself moved to anger against the lady who made them.

Bent on pursuing his investigations into the character of

this strange people, he went, the next day, into the city, to find the merchants and aldermen who had been so cordial to him at his "supposed Olympic Games." In a coffee-house, which was dirty, ill furnished, badly served, and dimly lighted, he found most of those gentlemen who, on the afternoon before, had been so affable and good-humored. Not a man of them recognized him. He ventured to address a remark to some of them. They either made no reply at all, or else merely answered yes or no. He imagined he must have offended them. He tried to remember if he had rated the fabrics of Lyons above theirs, if he had said that the French cooks were better than the English, if he had intimated that Paris was a more agreeable city than London, if he had hinted that time passed more pleasantly at Versailles than at St. James's, or if he had been guilty of any other enormity of that kind. No, his conscience acquitted him of all guilt. At length, " with an air of vivacity that appeared very strange to them," he took the liberty of asking one of them why they were all so melancholy. The prospect of being able to " chaff " a Frenchman appears to have put a little animation into this group of silent Britons. One of them replied, with a scowl, " The wind is east." At this moment one of their friends came up, who said, with an unmoved countenance, " Molly has cut her throat this morning. Her lover found her dead in her bedroom, with a bloody razor at her side." The company, " who all were Molly's friends," received this horrid intelligence without so much as lifting their eyebrows. One of them merely asked what had become of the lover. " He has bought the razor," quietly remarked one of the company.

The stranger, who seemed to take all this seriously and affects to relate it seriously, could not refrain from inquiring further into such a terrible tragedy. Appalled at once at the event and at the indifference of the company, he asked what could have induced a girl, apparently fortunate, to put an end to her existence in so revolting a manner. They only replied that the wind was east. Not being able to perceive anything in common between an east wind and the suicide of a young girl or the melancholy humor of the merchants, he abruptly left the coffee-house, and sought again his fashionable friends at court. There, too, all was sad;

and nobody could talk about anything but the east wind. He thought of the Dane whom he had met on the stand at Greenwich Fair, and was inclined to laugh at the false idea he was carrying home with him of the English climate; but, to his amazement, he found that the climate was having its effect upon himself, — he could not laugh! Expressing his surprise to one of the court physicians, the doctor told him not to be astonished so soon, for in the months of November and March he would have cause indeed to wonder. *Then* people hanged themselves by dozens, everybody was sick with low spirits, and a black melancholy overspread the whole nation; for in those months the wind blew most frequently from the east. "This wind," continued the doctor, "is the bane of our island. The very animals suffer from it, and wear a dejected look. Men robust enough to stand this cursed wind lose at least their good humor. Every one shows a severe countenance and has a mind disposed to desperate resolutions. It was an east wind that cut off the head of Charles I. and dethroned James II." Then, whispering in the ear of the Frenchman, he added, "If you have a favor to ask at court, never ask it unless the wind is west or south."

It was not alone the courtiers and the merchants who were disposed to amuse themselves with this inquisitive foreigner. He was in a boat one day upon the Thames. One of the oarsmen, seeing that he had a Frenchman for a passenger, began to boast of the superior liberty of his country, and declared, with an oath, that he would rather be a Thames boatman than a French archbishop. The next day, Voltaire relates, he saw this very man at the window of a prison, stretching his hand through the bars. "What do you think now of a French archbishop?" cried Voltaire. "Ah, sir," replied the man, "the abominable government we have! They have forced me away from my wife and children to serve in a king's ship, and have put me in prison and chained my feet, for fear I should run away before the ship sails." A Frenchman who was with Voltaire at the time confessed that he felt a malicious pleasure in seeing that the English, who reproached the French with their servitude, were as much slaves as they. "I had a sentiment more humane," remarks Voltaire. "I was grieved that there was no more liberty

on earth." He consoled himself, also, with observing that, if the king impressed sailors, everybody in England could speak and write with sufficient freedom. "I have seen four very learned treatises against the reality of the miracles of Jesus Christ printed here with impunity, at a time when a poor bookseller was put into the pillory for publishing a translation of "La Religieuse en Chemise." He thought it a strange British inconsistency that the government should permit the printing of heresy and punish the publication of indecency. A few days after, he observed another oddity at Newmarket. He was told that there he would see the true Olympic Games. He saw, indeed, a concourse of noblemen, the king and royal family, and a "prodigious number of the swiftest horses in Europe flying around the course, ridden by little postilions in silk jackets;" but he also saw "jockeys of quality betting against one another, who put into this solemnity more of swindling than magnificence."[1] He preferred Greenwich Fair to Newmarket races.

These may be taken as his first impressions of England; and probably the strange things he saw on every side distracted and amused him for a few days or weeks. But he had not come to England to stay. He had promised the minister to *go* to England; but he had entered, so far as we know, into no engagement as to the length of his stay. A few weeks after his arrival, he returned secretly to France, in quest of Rohan. He concealed himself there, and, as it seems, wore some disguise. He saw no member of his family: not his sister, whom he loved; still less his brother, whom he did not love. He did not let his comrade, Thieriot, know that he had been in Paris until he was safe out of it, perhaps at Rouen, more than once his hiding-place. From his retreat in France he wrote, August 12, 1726, to Thieriot a long and melancholy letter. He remained during many months of this year in the depths of gloom.

"I will confess to you, my dear Thieriot [he wrote], that I made a little journey to Paris lately. Since I did not see you, you will easily conclude that I saw no one. I sought but a single man, whom the instinct of his poltroonery concealed from me, as if he had divined that I was on his track. At last, the fear of being discovered

[1] 35 Œuvres de Voltaire, 7.

made me leave more precipitately than I came. I am still uncertain whether I shall return to London. England is a country, I know, where all the arts are honored and recompensed; where there is a difference in conditions, but none between man and man except that of merit. It is a country where men think freely and nobly, unrestrained by servile fear. If I should follow my inclination, it is there that I should fix myself, if only to learn how to think. But I know not if my limited fortune, much disordered by my frequent journeys, my bad health, now worse than ever, and my preference for the most profound seclusion, will permit me to encounter the clatter and bustle of Whitehall and London. I am well introduced in that country, and I am expected there with cordiality enough; but I cannot assure you that I shall make the voyage. I have but two things to do in my life: one, to risk it with honor as soon as I can; and the other, to pass what shall remain of it in the obscurity of a retreat suited to my way of thinking, to my misfortunes, and to my knowledge of men.

"I abandon with good heart my pensions from the king and queen; regretting only not to have been able to secure you a share of them. It would be a consolation to me in my solitude to think that I had been able, once in my life, to be of some use to you; but I am fated to be unfortunate in all ways. The greatest pleasure an honest man can feel, that of giving pleasure to his friends, is denied to me. . . . . If I have still some friends who pronounce my name in your hearing, speak to them of me with moderation, and cherish the remembrance which they are willing to preserve of me."

He remained in concealment for about two months; then crossed the Channel once more, and prepared to settle in England. A budget of letters awaited him, the first he had received since leaving the Bastille. Among them was one from a Mademoiselle Bessières, who had been an inmate of his father's house, and was in some way closely allied to the family. She may have been his governess. From her he now received the intelligence of his only sister's death. The letter which he wrote in reply was all tenderness and contrition. Weaned from the great world which had flattered, deluded, and abandoned him, his heart softened toward his kindred and the friends of his childhood, even toward that Jansenist of a brother of his, who, as he thought, had behaved less like a brother than ever to him since his father's estate had been in litigation. Thus he wrote to Mademoiselle Bessières, October 15, 1726: —

"What can I say to you, mademoiselle, about the death of my sister, if not that it would have been far better for our family and for me if I had been taken away in her stead? It is not for me to speak to you of the little importance I attach to this passage, so short and so difficult, which is called life. Upon that subject you have ideas more enlightened than I, and drawn from purer sources. I am acquainted only with the sorrows of life, but you know their remedies; and the difference between us is that between patient and doctor.

"I pray you, mademoiselle, to have the goodness to fulfill even to the end the charitable zeal which you deign to have for me on this mournful occasion. Either prevail upon my brother to give me, without a single moment's delay, some news of his health, or else give me some yourself. He alone remains to you of all my father's family, which you regarded as your own. As for me, you must no more count me. Not that I do not still live, so far as regards the respect and affection that I owe to you; but I am dead for all else. You are greatly mistaken — permit me to say it to you with tenderness and grief — in supposing that I have forgotten you. I have committed many faults in the course of my life. The chagrins and sufferings which have marked almost all my days have often been my own work. I feel how little worthy I am. My weaknesses seem pitiful to me, and my faults strike me with horror. But God is my witness that I love virtue, and that therefore I am tenderly attached to you for my whole life. Adieu; I embrace you. Allow me to use this expression with all the respect and all the gratitude which I owe to Mademoiselle Bessières."

In a similar strain he wrote the next day to Madame de Bernières, telling her that he was more dead to the world even than his dead sister, and entreating her to forget everything about him except the moments when she had assured him she would always be his friend. "Reckon the moments when I may have displeased you among the number of my misfortunes, and love me from generosity, if you cannot any longer from inclination."

To complete his unhappiness, he suffered a considerable loss of money soon after his arrival in England. He brought with him a letter of credit upon Acosta, a Jewish banker, upon presenting which he received a reply which Wagnière thus reports: "Sir, I am very sorry; I cannot pay you; for, in the name of the Lord, I went into bankruptcy three days ago."[1]

[1] 1 Mémoires sur Voltaire, par Longchamp and Wagnière, 23.

Voltaire, thirty years after, used to tell this story in his bantering manner, and state the amount of his loss at twenty thousand francs. The banker, he used to say, had "the generosity" to pay him some guineas, which a bankrupt could not have been compelled to do; and secretary Wagnière adds that "the king of England, having heard of the stranger's embarrassment, sent him a hundred guineas." His pensions from the French court were not paid during his stay abroad. He was not present to call for the money, and under the *régime* of the period the claims of a pensioner in disgrace were not likely to receive attention at the treasury. Thus, at the age of thirty-two, for a proper and becoming retort to a blackguard's insult, he saw himself obliged to begin the world anew in a foreign land, the very language of which he knew scarcely anything of. To an ordinary traveler ignorance of the language of a foreign country is merely an inconvenience; but to this stranger language was the tool of his vocation, and he had deliberately forborne to acquire skill in the use of any other.

But he rose to the occasion. He put forth that peculiar energy, intense, well-directed, good-humored, sustained, which men exert who conquer the world, and remain victorious to the end. And, first of all, to get possession of the language of his new country. He studied English as though he expected to pass the rest of his days in England, and meant to try a career as an English author. His introduction to the Walpoles and his acquaintance with the Bolingbrokes opened to him the most interesting houses, political and literary; but it was not among the lords of the isle that he found the one helpful friend a stranger needs while he is struggling with a new language. Among the men of business whom he may have met at Greenwich Fair was Everard Falkener, silk and cloth merchant, afterwards Sir Everard Falkener, English ambassador at Constantinople. This gentleman, who was well versed in the classic languages, a collector of ancient coins and medals, and possessor of a good library, lived at Wandsworth, a pleasant village on the Thames, four or five miles above London, and not far from Richmond. In the hospitable manner of the time he took the stranger home, and kept him there a favored guest whenever he was not invited elsewhere. Everard Falkener's house at Wandsworth was, in fact, the home

of the exile during his stay in England; and these two remained friends and correspondents for thirty-five years after, or as long as both lived. The friendship was continued even to the next generation; for Voltaire lived to welcome under his own roof at Ferney two grown sons of Sir Everard Falkener, to sit between them at his own table, and tell them stories of the time when their father was a father to him in England. Curiously enough, he foretold the ambassadorship of Falkener. "I was a prophet once in my life," he wrote, in 1738, to Thieriot, "although not in my own country. It was in London, at our dear Falkener's house. He was only a merchant, and I predicted that he would be ambassador at the Porte. He laughed; but, behold, he is ambassador!"

The merchant, we may infer, was a contented, cheerful soul, without desire to be ambassador or baronet. Voltaire quotes, in his "Remarks upon Pascal," a few pleasant lines of a letter which he received from Falkener in 1728: "I am here just as you left me: neither merrier, nor sadder, nor richer, nor poorer; enjoying perfect health, having everything that renders life agreeable; without love, without avarice, without ambition, and without envy, — and as long as all that lasts I shall call myself a very happy man." This is a good kind of person for a stranger in a strange land to fall in with.

An inmate now of an English home, and a frequent guest at others, he was much surprised, it appears, at their plain furniture and meagre decoration. London, he afterwards wrote, was very far, in 1726, from being equal to Paris, either in splendor, in taste, in sumptuosity, in costly objects, in agreeableness, in the fine arts, or in the art of society. He declared that there were "five hundred times more silver plate in the houses of Paris *bourgeois* than in those of London." A Paris notary, solicitor, or draper, he said, was better lodged, better furnished, better served, than a magistrate of the first city of England; and Paris consumed in one day more poultry and game than London in a week. Paris, he thought, burned a thousand times more wax candles than London; for, except at the court end, London was lighted only with tallow.[1]

Under Falkener's hospitable roof, with inmates eager to assist him, he improved rapidly in his English. We all under

[1] 61 Œuvres de Voltaire, 403.

rate the obstacles in the way of making a conquest of another language, a feat so difficult as to approach impossibility, and few men have ever really done it since our race began to articulate. It is probably true, as a writer has recently asserted, that not more than three educated men are ever alive at the same time who know a foreign tongue as well as they know their own. Voltaire evidently meant to be one. English, he would say, was "a learned language," and deserved to be studied as such. The reader shall see for himself what progress he made. He landed on English soil in May, 1726; and we have three English letters of his written within the first nine months of his stay. Unfortunately, the least correct one comes to us without date, but we may suppose it written in the summer of 1726. It was copied from the original manuscript without change. The John Brinsden, to whom it was addressed, appears to have been a wine merchant, and to have had relations with Lord Bolingbroke.

"Sir, — j wish you good health, a quick sale of y^{r} burgundy, much latin, and greeke to one of y^{r} children, much Law, much of cooke and littleton, to the other. quiet and joy to mistress brinsden, money to all. when you'll drink y^{r} burgundy with mr furneze, pray tell him j'll never forget his favours.

"But dear john be so kind as to let me know how does my lady Bollingbroke, as to my lord j left him so well j dont doubt he is so still. but j am very uneasie about my lady. If she might have as much health as she has spirit & witt, Sure she would be the Strongest body in england. Pray dear s^{r} write me Something of her, of my lord, and of you. direct y^{r} letter by the penny post at m^{r} Cavalier, Belitery square by the R Exchange. j am sincerely & heartily y^{r} most humble most obedient rambling friend VOLTAIRE.

"john Brinsden, esq.
durham's yard
by charing cross." [1]

This being about such a letter as he would be equal to after two or three months of English study, we may presume that it was written before he returned to France in search of his chevalier. Our next specimen is dated in November; but probably its mere verbal correctness is due to the English editor who

[1] Notes and Queries, 1868. "I transcribe [says a correspondent of Notes and Queries] the following letter from the Bazar, or Literary and Scientific Repository, 4to, 1824, an obscure and forgotten periodical published in Birmingham."

first gave it to the public. It is a note addressed to Alexander Pope, after his overturn in Lord Bolingbroke's great six-horse coach, near Dawly, in Shropshire. The accident happened in crossing a bridge, and Pope was thrown into the stream.

"SIR: — I hear this moment of your sad adventure: the water you fell into was not Hippocrene's water; otherwise it would have supported you: indeed, I am concerned beyond expression for the danger you have been in, and more for your wounds. Is it possible, that those fingers which have written 'The Rape of the Lock,' the 'Criticism,' and which have so becomingly dressed Homer in an English coat, should have been so barbarously treated? Let the hand of Dennis or of your poetasters be cut off, — yours is sacred. I hope, sir, you are now perfectly recovered. Really, your accident concerns me as much as all the disasters of a master ought to affect his scholar. I am sincerely, sir, with the admiration which you deserve,

"Your most humble servant,

"VOLTAIRE.

"In my Lord Bolingbroke's House,
Friday, at noon, Nov. 16, 1726."

Our third specimen is a familiar letter, written in March, 1727, to Thieriot, who had asked him to find some books in London; as Thieriot, too, was deep in English studies, and desired to get a popular English book to translate into French. Voltaire began his letter in French, telling him that the parcel of books was on its way to Calais, whence it would be conveyed by coach to Paris. Then he broke into English in the manner following: —

"It was indeed a very hard task formed to find that damned book which, under the title of 'Improvement of Human Reason' [a translation from the Arabic], is an example of nonsense from one end to the other, and which besides is a tedious nonsense, and consequently very distasteful to the French nation, that detests madness itself, when madness is languishing and flat. The book is scarce, because it is bad, it being the fate of all wretched books never to be printed again. So I spent almost a fortnight in the search of it, till at last I had the misfortune to find it.

"I hope you will not read it throughout, that spiritless nonsense romance, though indeed you deserve to read it, to do penance for the trouble you gave me to inquire after it, for the tiresome perusal I made of some parts of this whimsical, stupid performance, and for

your credulity in believing those who gave you so great an idea of so mean a thing.

"You will find in the same parcel the second volume of M. Gulliver, which (by the by I don't advise you to translate) strikes at the first; the other is overstrained. The reader's imagination is pleased and charmingly entertained by the new prospect of the lands which Gulliver discovers to him; but that continued series of new fangles, of follies, of fairy tales, of wild inventions, pall at last upon our taste. Nothing unnatural may please long: it is for this reason that commonly the second parts of romances are so insipid. Farewell; my services to those who remember me; but I hope I am quite forgot here [there?]."[1]

There are sentences in this letter which show the beginning of facility in English. "The book is scarce because it is bad, it being the fate of all wretched books never to be printed again," is a good English sentence, besides containing a valuable hint for the collectors of antiquated trash. The remark, however, did not apply to the work in question, which was printed several times, — once in Latin, and twice at least in English. Later in 1727, when, perhaps, he had studied English a little more than a year, he wrote a few lines of English verse, which show considerable command of the language: —

TO LAURA HARLEY.

Laura, would you know the passion
You have kindled in my breast?
Trifling is the inclination
That by words can be expressed.
In my silence see the lover;
True love is by silence known;
In my eyes you 'll best discover
All the power of your own.

This Laura Harley was the wife of an English merchant, who obtained a divorce from her, and mentioned these lines in his petition as one of the evidences of his right to a divorce. They were, probably, on the part of Voltaire, a mere exercise in English, the husband's complaint being against "two other seducers of his wife."[2]

From these examples we may conclude that, early in his

[1] Lettres Inédites de Voltaire, page 35.

[2] Les Divorces Anglais, par Châteauneuf, Paris, 1821. Quoted in 18 Œuvres de Voltaire, 240.

residence in England, he was able to take part in conversation and to read the authors with whom he associated. He continued to work hard in the language, and began to write in it for the public eye before he had been eighteen months in England. We have about thirty letters of his written in English, many of them to Falkener, and some after he had been absent twenty years from England. These letters show that he was one of those foreigners who could have made English entirely his own, and that he did actually make great progress towards it. All his life he was fond of throwing bits of English into his conversation and letters, and took pleasure in speaking the language when he was a very old man, past eighty. To that very Franklin who was then setting type in a London printing-house, a journeyman of nineteen, he spoke English, when they met in Paris, fifty-two years after.

CHAPTER XXII.

RESIDENCE IN ENGLAND.

He appears to have known almost every person of note in England. "Old Horace Walpole's" letter of recommendation made him free of the great whig houses and circles. Writing, forty-one years later, to Horace Walpole, of Strawberry Hill, nephew to "Old Horace," and son of Sir Robert, he said, "Perhaps I am unknown to you, although I was once honored with the friendship of the Two Brothers."[1] So the Walpoles were often styled at the time when one of them was supreme in home politics, and the other well skilled in those of Continental courts. The conspicuous whig house then was the new seat of Bubb Dodington in Dorsetshire, where authors and artists were among the frequent and most welcome guests, and where also the Two Brothers or their colleagues were occasionally to be met. Voltaire was soon a familiar guest at this magnificent abode.

Edward Young, who had not yet written the "Night Thoughts," nor even taken orders, though forty-six years of age, was often there in those years. He was at this period a poet and dramatist of great celebrity, known to the London public chiefly as the author of the hideous and popular tragedy of "The Revenge," a play that afforded fine howling to the tragedians of two generations. Oddly enough, Voltaire, future author of "La Pucelle," and Young, of the "Night Thoughts," became and long remained very good friends, discoursing much together at Dodington's on matters literary. On one occasion, as Spence records, the conversation turned upon the dialogue in "Paradise Lost" (Book X.) between Sin and Death, beginning, —

> "Within the gates of hell sat Sin and Death,
> In counterview within the gates, that now

[1] Voltaire à Ferney, page 410.

Stood open wide, belching outrageous flame
Far into Chaos, since the fiend passed through,
Sin opening; who thus now to Death began:
'O son, why sit we here each other viewing?'"

Voltaire, with vehemence, objected to the personification of Sin and Death. The reader has only to glance at the passage in Milton, and then think of Voltaire's reading it before he was at all equal to such English as that, and he will feel how absurd it must have seemed to him. Young replied by the well-known epigram, of which the best version is given by Dr. Johnson:—

"'You are so witty, profligate, and thin,
At once we think you Milton, Death, and Sin."[1]

This happy stroke, it appears, softened the severity of the French critic. Young remembered the incident when, many years later, he dedicated his "Sea Piece" "to Mr. Voltaire."

"'Tell me,' say'st thou, 'who courts my smile?
What stranger strayed from yonder isle?'
No stranger, sir, though born in foreign climes;
On Dorset Downs, where Milton's page
With Sin and Death provoked thy rage,
Thy rage provoked, who soothed with gentle rhymes;
Who kindly couched thy censure's eye,
And gave thee clearly to descry
Sound judgment giving law to fancy strong;
Who half inclined thee to confess,
Nor could thy modesty do less,
That Milton's blindness lay not in his song.
But such debates long since are flown,
Forever set the suns that shone
On airy pastimes ere our brows were gray;
How shortly shall we both forget,
To thee, my patron, I my debt,
And thou to thine, for Prussia's golden key."

These lines, written not less than a quarter of a century after the conversation upon Milton, show us, at least, that it made a lively impression upon the mind of the English poet. Another poet, often a guest of Dodington's, may have taken part in it, — Thomson, whose "Winter" was then in its first popularity. He sold the manuscript for three guineas in 1726, saw the third edition before the year was out, and was now bringing forward the other "Seasons." Voltaire mentions having known him in England, and speaks slightingly of his poetry.

[1] 2 Lives of the Poets, 529. N. Y. edition, 1861.

Swift was then at the summit of his career; for in 1724 he gave Ireland the "Drapier Letters," and in 1726 he published the first part of "Gulliver's Travels." He was much in England during Voltaire's stay, and the French poet became familiar with him. When Swift visited France, in 1727, he carried a letter of introduction from Voltaire to Count de Morville, the French minister for foreign affairs. "I believe," wrote Voltaire in this epistle, "that you will not be sorry to dine with M. Swift and President Hénault; and I flatter myself that you will regard as a proof of my sincere attachment to your person the liberty I take in presenting to you one of the most extraordinary men that England has produced, and the most capable of feeling all the extent of your great qualities."

The dramatist Congreve, long retired from active life on munificent pensions and sinecures, was another of Voltaire's English acquaintances. "He was infirm and almost dying," the exile records, "when I knew him. He had one fault, — that of not sufficiently esteeming his first trade of author, which had made his fame and fortune. He spoke to me of his works as trifles beneath him, and told me, at our first conversation, to visit him only on the footing of a gentleman who lived very simply. I replied that if he had had the misfortune to be only a gentleman like another, I should never have come to see him; and I was shocked at a vanity so ill placed." It may have been through Congreve that Voltaire became so intimate with the valiant old Duchess of Marlborough, to whose daughter the dramatist left his fortune. The duchess gave him several choice morsels of information, which he used with effect in later historical works. She even told him the amount of her revenue as widow, namely, seventy thousand pounds sterling. The duchess, he says, was convinced that Queen Anne, late in her reign, had had a secret interview in England with her brother, James II., and assured him that if he would renounce the Roman religion, "which the English regard as the mother of tyranny," she would designate him as her successor.[1] Several of the old officers of the Duke of Marlborough supplied him with information relating to the long contest with Louis XIV., which he kept

[1] Siècle de Louis XIV., chapter xxiv.

safe in his memory or note-book for many a year, until the moment came for them to fall into their places.

He speaks also of having known Bishop Berkeley, the Bishop of Rochester, John Byng, afterwards admiral, and Gay, the author of the "Beggars' Opera." He may have witnessed the first performance of Gay's work in 1727, the great hit of that year, — a success that drew the town away from Handel's operas, and spoiled his season. He knew Sir Hans Sloane, president, after Newton's death, of the Royal Society. Sir Isaac Newton he just missed; for Sir Isaac died in March, 1727, before Voltaire had been a year in the country.

Of all the events that occurred in England during his residence there, the one that appears to have made the deepest impression upon his mind was the burial of Sir Isaac Newton. He was in London on the 28th of March, when the remains of the philosopher lay in state in the Jerusalem Chamber, and statesmen, nobles, and philosophers gathered there to pay the last homage to a man whose sole claim to distinction was that he had enlarged the boundaries of human knowledge. When the body was carried to its last resting-place in Westminster Abbey, the pall was borne by the lord chancellor, the highest official in the kingdom, by the Duke of Montrose and the Duke of Roxburgh, by the Earls of Pembroke, Sussex, and Macclesfield, — members of the Royal Society, of which Newton had been president for nearly a quarter of a century. The funeral was attended by a concourse of the men highest in rank and greatest in name in England, and its solemn pageantry was witnessed by a multitude of citizens who understood little, it is true, of what Newton had done for them and their posterity, but who felt, in some degree, how becoming it was in men great by accident to pay such honors to a man great by nature.

There were two poets upon whom this scene, so honorable to England and to human nature, made a profound impression. One of these was Thomson. In his poem upon the death of Newton, he expresses the feeling that in honoring *him* England redeemed herself: —

> "For, though depraved and sunk, she brought thee forth,
> And glories in thy name; she points thee out
> To all her sons, and bids them eye thy star,
> While, in expectance of the second life,

When time shall be no more, thy sacred dust
Sleeps with her kings, and dignifies the scene.'

What a lasting impression was made upon Voltaire's susceptible mind by Newton's stately funeral the numerous allusions to it in his letters attest. In extreme old age, his eye would kindle and his countenance light up when he spoke of his once having lived in a land where a professor of mathematics, only because he was great in his vocation, could be buried in a temple where the ashes of kings reposed, and the highest subjects in the kingdom felt it an honor to assist in bearing thither his body.

He was curious to know something more of Newton than he could learn from the ordinary sources of information. In his later writings he alludes several times to his having known in England Mrs. Conduit, Sir Isaac's niece. From her lips he heard the apple story, and to him, as it seems, the world owes the preservation of that most interesting of anecdotes. "One day in the year 1666, Newton, then retired to the country, seeing some fruit fall from a tree, as I was told by his niece, Madame Conduit, fell into a profound meditation upon the cause which draws all bodies in a line which, if prolonged, would pass very nearly through the centre of the earth."[1] He preserves on the same page another anecdote of Newton, perhaps derived from the same source: "A stranger asked Newton, one day, how he had discovered the laws of the universe. 'By thinking of them without ceasing,' was the philosopher's reply." I wonder if he heard from Madame Conduit the Newton anecdote related in the "Philosophical Dictionary:" "In my youth I believed that Newton had made his fortune by his extreme merit. I imagined that the court and city of London had named him by acclamation Master of the Mint. Not at all. Isaac Newton had a niece, sufficiently amiable, named Madame Conduit, who was very pleasing to the chancellor of the exchequer, Halifax. Infinitesimal calculus and gravitation would have availed nothing without a pretty niece."

Newton's study of the prophecies amazed, puzzled, and even saddened this studious exile. How such mighty powers of mind could accommodate themselves to the mere consideration of

[1] Philosophie de Newton, par Voltaire, chapter iii.

such a subject was a baffling enigma to him. "What a poor species the human race," he exclaims, "if the great Newton believed he had found in the Apocalypse the present history of Europe!" Elsewhere he adds the famous sentence, "Apparently, Newton wished by that commentary upon the Apocalypse to console the human race for the superiority he had over it."[1]

Of the authors whom Voltaire met and studied in England, the one who influenced his own writings most was, beyond question, Alexander Pope. The friendship of Bolingbroke brought him at once into cordial relations with the circle of which that nobleman was the idol and Pope the ornament. The affection entertained for Bolingbroke by literary men was as remarkable as the detestation in which he was held by some of his political associates. Pope paid him the most stupendous compliment, perhaps, that one mortal ever bestowed upon another. "I really think," said Pope, "that there is something in that great man which looks as if he were placed here by mistake. When the comet appeared to us, a month or two ago, I had sometimes an imagination that it might possibly have come to our world to carry him away, as a coach comes to one's door for other visitors." And when Pope was dying Bolingbroke hung sobbing over his chair, and said, "I have known him these thirty years, and value myself more upon that man's love than" — His voice failed him, and he could utter no more. Voltaire was fond of both these brilliant men. In one of his poetical epistles, published in 1726, he speaks of Bolingbroke as one who possessed the eloquence of Cicero, the intrepidity of Cato, the wit of Mæcenas, and the agreeableness of Petronius. He loved him living, and he defended him dead. He relates, however, but one trifling anecdote of his intercourse with Lord Bolingbroke. The conversation turning one day upon the alleged avarice of the Duke of Marlborough, some one appealed to Bolingbroke to confirm the allegation, and with the more confidence because Bolingbroke had been of the party opposed to Marlborough. His reply was, "He was so great a man that I have forgotten his faults."

Pope's mastery of the art of rhyming would have sufficed to attract the regard of a man who had written only in rhyme,

[1] 7 Dictionnaire Philosophique, 172.

and who thought that there was no true poetry without rhyme. It appears that upon this vexed question of rhyme Pope and Voltaire were of the same opinion. He tells us that he asked Pope, one day, why Milton had not written "Paradise Lost" in rhyme. "Because he could not," answered Pope. This does not accord with the experience of Pope's successor in Homeric translation. Cowper says that to rhyme in English demands "no great exercise of ingenuity;" and that he has frequently written more lines in a day "with tags to them" than he ever could without. Voltaire and Pope were in accord upon subjects of more importance than the construction of poems. The vein of moralizing that runs through many of Pope's productions was peculiarly pleasing to Voltaire, who constantly insists that a poem should do something more than amuse. Pope had not yet written the "Essay on Man," nor the "Universal Prayer;" but his conversation was much in the spirit of those works, which Voltaire regarded as among the choicest master-pieces of English literature, and which by and by he caused to be translated into French.

The religious tone that prevailed in the circles of Pope and Bolingbroke could not have differed materially from that to which the stranger was accustomed in France. Educated men of the world in both countries were very likely to be deists. But in France no man then dared print deism in the vulgar tongue, and no moral teaching was allowed which did not appear to concede the claims of the church. The great dictionary, or cyclopædia, of Pierre Bayle, published originally in 1696, and enlarged to four volumes in 1720, is indeed full of that which makes men doubt and deny. Voltaire was familiar with the work from boyhood, as were all the reading men and thinking men of that generation in France. But not only was Bayle obliged to publish his work at distant Rotterdam, but in treating all the delicate topics he was compelled to use the utmost caution and management, veiling his obvious incredulity under forms and professions of respect. Glance over the article upon Spinoza, for example. Including the notes, which are much more voluminous than the text, we may say of this article that it suggests and indicates the whole struggle of the human mind with the problem of the universe. The opinions and conjectures of the ancients, the beliefs, de-

nials, and differences of the moderns, are all sketched or stated; pantheism, atheism, and deism are described or defined; and the reader is assisted, nay, compelled, to survey the stupendous and ever-fascinating theme from a height above the belfry of the parish church. But the parish church is, as the French say, "managed" from first to last. No pretext is given to the censor or the inquisitor. Take one specimen: "People who associated with Spinoza, and the peasants of the villages where he lived for some time in seclusion, agree in saying that he was a man of good habits, affable, honest, obliging, and of strict morality. *That is strange;* but, really, it is not more astonishing than to see people living very badly, though they have a full persuasion of the gospel." To this passage profuse notes are appended, exalting still higher the pure and noble character of Spinoza. There is scarcely an important article in all the four ponderous volumes of Bayle that does not hint or insinuate similar dissent from the enforced way of thinking.

But in England, as the exile observed, the deists were not obliged to insinuate. Deism, long in vogue in the "great world," was now becoming popular among portions of the people, and printed its thought with very little reserve or "management." And yet the movement had begun at Paris. One hundred and two years before Voltaire saw England, Lord Herbert, English ambassador at Paris, after getting, as he supposed, a revelation from Heaven, published his treatise against revelation, "De Veritate," copies of which he sent to the learned of all Europe, and thus began deism. His five points were: (1.) There is a God. (2.) Man should worship him. (3.) The practice of virtue is the chief part of worship. (4.) Faults are expiated by repentance. (5.) There must be a future of reward and punishment. The ambassador covered his heresies with the safe and decent mantle of the Latin language; and so did some of his successors.

But deism was now getting into language which could be called vulgar in more senses than one. After Herbert, Hobbes, and Shaftsbury, came Toland, Collins, Tindal, and others, each bolder than the last, until, in 1727, under the eyes of this French exile, all former audacities were eclipsed by Woolston in his "Six Discourses on the Miracles." This writer, a Cam-

bridge master of arts, put into coarse, uncompromising English what many deists were accustomed to utter in conversation every time two or three of them found themselves together. He affected to believe that the miracles must be interpreted as allegories, because, if taken literally, they were too absurd for serious consideration. He proceeded to comment upon each miracle in turn with a freedom never before seen in print, but also with the crude and boisterous humor that pleased Londoners when Hogarth was an apprentice. He said, for example, that the wine miraculously made at the wedding feast for guests already drunk must have been punch, and that the whole story was so monstrous that no one not brutalized by superstition could believe it. This specimen will suffice. Since that day, the reading world has been familiarized with this mode of treating such subjects, and has discovered how inoperative it is when both writers and writing are let alone. It was a startling novelty in 1727. Woolston advertised that he would sell his discourses at his own house, and buyers came thither in great numbers. Voltaire states that thirty thousand copies were sold during the last two years of his stay in England; and no one then molested the author. The Bishop of London wrote five pastoral letters warning his flock against these essays, and at length caused Woolston to be prosecuted. He was sentenced to a year's imprisonment and to a fine of a hundred pounds. Refusing to give bonds not to repeat his offense, he was obliged to pass the brief remainder of his life within "the bounds" of King's Bench prison.

The lightness of Woolston's sentence and the length of time that elapsed before he was prosecuted indicate the hold which deism had upon the public. Voltaire saw it prevalent in the houses of noblemen and poets, and Woolston's career showed him that it had made its way among the multitude in the shop and the street. There were clubs of deists in London, which held weekly meetings in ale-houses, and reconstructed the universe over pots of beer. Young Franklin composed his pamphlet in 1725 upon "Liberty and Necessity," designed to refute Wollaston's "Religion of Nature," which he had assisted to set in type. He carried negation in this work far beyond deism, — even beyond atheism, if that is possible; denying equally the existence of

good and the existence of evil, and asserting that in every state and stage of conceivable existence pleasure and pain are and must be equal in quantity.[1] His companions were not shocked, it appears, at these bold speculations; and, so far as we can discern, such entire freedom from the traditional and the legendary was held in esteem among the workingmen of London.

None of these things escaped the observation of the exile, abundant in labors as he was. To him England was a university. Few strangers have ever extracted more in two years and a half from a foreign country than he from England; although, during his residence there, he performed much work that remains readable, and is constantly read, to the present hour. Note the catalogue of his studies and labors. First, the partial acquisition of the "learned language," which involved a wide survey of its literature, and a study of many authors, — Newton, Shakespeare, Milton, Dryden, Locke, Bacon, Swift, Pope, Addison, the later dramatists, and many others. It was no easy task for a Frenchman of that age to so much as forgive Shakespeare for not being Racine, and Voltaire could never quite succeed in it. We can trace his struggles with the author of "Macbeth" and "Hamlet."

"Shakespeare [he remarks], the first tragic poet of the English, is rarely spoken of in England except as divine. In London I never saw the theatre as full to witness 'L'Andromaque' of Racine, well translated as it is by Philips, or Addison's 'Cato,' as when the ancient pieces of Shakespeare were performed. These pieces are monsters in tragedy. There are some plays the action of which lasts several years; the hero, baptized in the first act, dies of old age in the fifth. You see upon the stage wizards, peasants, drunkards, buffoons, grave-diggers digging a grave, who sing drinking songs while playing with skulls. In a word, imagine what you can of most monstrous and most absurd, you will find it in Shakespeare. When I began to learn the English language, I could not understand how so enlightened a nation as the English could admire so extravagant an author; but when I knew the language better, I perceived that the English were right, and that it is impossible for a whole nation to be deceived in a matter of sentiment, and mistaken as to their being pleased. They saw, as I saw, the crudities of their favorite author, but they felt his beauties better than

[1] For a copy of this pamphlet see Parton's Life of Franklin, vol. i p. 607.

I could, — beauties so much the more remarkable from their having flashed out in the midst of profoundest night. He has enjoyed his reputation for a hundred and fifty years. The authors who came after him have served to augment rather than diminish it. The great understanding of the author of 'Cato,' and his talents, which made him a secretary of state, did not give him a place by the side of Shakespeare. Such is the privilege of genius: it makes for itself a path where no one went before; it pursues its course without guide, without art, without rule; it goes astray in its career, but it leaves far behind all excellence that is merely reasonable and correct. Such was Homer: he created his art and left it imperfect; his works a chaos, where on all sides the light shines." [1]

Shakespeare, by turns, enraptured and repelled him. Returning from the theatre, one evening, after seeing with a delight he never forgot the "Julius Cæsar" of Shakespeare, he began to write a tragedy of Brutus in English prose. He continued the exercise until he had composed the first act very nearly as he afterwards executed it in French rhyme. Lord Bolingbroke, who, he says, gave him lessons in *French*, as well as in English, approved the plan, and the work was published before he left England.

During the whole year 1727 he was full of business, his most immediate scheme being the issue of the London edition of "La Henriade" by subscription. He was preparing, also, to write a book upon England, and was already at work upon his "History of Charles XII.," the material for which had been accumulating for some years, and had gained important accessions in London. To promote all these objects he now appeared as an English author. In a London monthly for December, 1727, I read the announcement of his work: —

"An Essay upon the Civil Wars of France, extracted from Curious M. S. And also upon the Epick Poetry of the European nations, from Homer down to Milton. By Arouet de Voltaire. London. Printed by Samuel Fallason in Prujean's Court, Old Bailey, and sold by the Booksellers of London and Westminster. 1727. In 8vo. pagg. 130."

The editor of the magazine merely adds a line of comment: "These two essays deserve to be read by all the curious." Among the literary curiosities in the British Museum is Sir

[1] Essai sur la Poësie Epique, chapter ii.

Hans Sloane's copy of the first edition of this work, kept in a glass case under lock and key. It is printed in large, clear, open type, a handsome book, and bears upon the upper part of the title-page, in the right-hand corner, the following words in Voltaire's own hand: —

To S^r^ hanslone
from his most
humble servant
voltaire.

The volume opens with an "Advertisement to the Reader," printed in italics, which reads thus: —

"It has the appearance of too great presumption in a Traveller who hath been but eighteen months in England, to attempt to write in a Language which he cannot pronounce at all, and which he hardly understands in Conversation. But I have done what we do every Day at School, where we write Latin and Greek, tho' surely we pronounce both very pitifully, and should understand neither of them if they were uttered to us with the right Roman or Greek pronunciation.

"I look upon the English Language as a learned one, which deserves to be the object of our Application in France, as the French tongue is thought a kind of Accomplishment in England.

"Besides I did not learn English for my private satisfaction and improvement only, but out of a kind of Duty.

"I am ordered to give an Account of my Journey into England. Such an Undertaking can no more be attempted without understanding the Language than a Scheme of Astronomy could be laid without the help of Mathematicks. And I have not a mind to imitate the late Mr Sorbières, who having stayed three months in this Country, without knowing anything either of its manners or of its language, thought fit to print a relation which proved but a dull, scurrilous Satire upon a Nation he knew nothing of.

"Our European travellers, for the most part, are satirical upon their neighbouring Countries, and bestow large Praises upon the Persians and Chinese; it being too natural to revile those who stand in Competition with us; and to extol those, who being far remote from us, are out of the reach of Envy.

"The true aim of a Relation is to instruct Men, not to gratify their Malice. We should be busied chiefly in giving faithful Accounts of all the useful Things, and of the extraordinary Persons; whom to know, and to imitate would be a Benefit to our Countrymen. A Traveller who writes in that Spirit is a Merchant of a nobler kind,

who Imports into his native Country the Arts and Virtues of other Nations.

"I will leave to others the Care of describing with Accuracy Paul's Church, the Monument, Westminster, Stonehenge, etc. I consider England in another view; it strikes my Eyes, as it is the Land which hath produced a Newton, a Locke, a Tillotson, a Milton, a Boyle; and many great Men, either dead or alive, whose Glory in War, in State-Affairs, or in Letters, will not be confined to the Bounds of this Island.

"Whoever had the Honour and Happiness to be acquainted with any of them, and will do me the favour to let me know some notable (tho' perhaps not enough known) Passages of their Lives, will confer an Obligation, not only upon me, but upon the Publick.

"Likewise if there are any new Inventions or Undertakings which have obtained or deserved Success, I shall be obliged to those who will be so kind as to give me any Information of that Nature: and shall either quote my Authors or observe a religious Silence, according as they think proper.

"As to this present Essay, it is intended as a kind of Preface or Introduction to the Henriade; the Octavo Edition whereof is sold by N. Prevost; as also the French Tragedy of Brutus."

The volume attracted much attention, and reached a fourth edition. The "Essay upon Epic Poetry" is agreeable and suggestive reading even at this day. The passage upon Shakespeare, quoted above from the French translation, gives an idea of its manner. The library of the British Museum contains a copy of the fourth edition of the work, published in 1731, corrected by the author: "to which is prefixed 'a discourse on tragedy, with reflections on the English and French drama.' Bound with this copy is a critical pamphlet of eighty-one pages, entitled, 'Remarks on M. Voltaire's Essay upon Epick Poetry, by Paul Rolli. London, 1728,'" in which Milton is defended against Voltaire's censure. In the "Discourse on Tragedy," Voltaire addresses Lord Bolingbroke: —

"Your Lordship knows that the tragedy of Brutus was struck off in Great Britain. You may remember that whilst I was in Wandsworth, with my excellent friend, Mr. Faulkner, I amused myself with writing the first act of the following tragedy in English prose, which I have since worked up in French verse, with little alteration. I used to mention it to you sometimes, and we both wondered that no English poet had yet attempted to raise a tragedy upon this subject,

which, of all others, is perhaps adapted to the English stage. Your Lordship prompted me to finish a dramatic piece susceptible of such exalted sentiments.

"Permit me, therefore, to present you with Brutus, though written in French.

"At my return from England, when I had closely studied the English language for two years put together, 't was with some diffidence that I attempted to write a tragedy in French. I had almost accustomed myself to think in English, and I found that the expressions of my own tongue were not now so familiar to me; 't was like a river whose course having been diverted, both time and pains were required to bring it back to its own bed."

The Essays promoted, doubtless, the subscriptions to "La Henriade." What, indeed, could have advertised it better? The English quarto edition of that poem, announced in 1726, price one guinea, was not ready till 1728, and during the interval the author lent his personal energy and tact to the work of getting subscriptions, not disdaining to solicit literary friends to hand the proposals about their circle. The copperplates engraved in Paris, and used in the Rouen edition, were made to do duty a second time. The volume was a handsome, gilt-edged quarto, of 202 pages, in large type, with ample margin, and but twenty-two lines on a page. It was announced as "the first edition published with the author's sanction." Queen Caroline, who came to the throne in June, 1727, with her husband, George II., was then one of the most popular princesses in Europe, and to her Voltaire rededicated his poem. As Princess of Wales, she had been much the friend of Sir Isaac Newton, a fact of which the author of the dedication was doubtless aware.

"To the Queen.

"Madam: — It was the fate of Henry the Fourth to be protected by an English queen. He was assisted by the great Elizabeth, who was in her age the glory of her sex. By whom can his memory be so well protected as by her who resembles so much Elizabeth in her personal virtues?

"Your Majesty will find in this book bold, impartial truths; morality unstained with superstition; a spirit of liberty, equally abhorrent of rebellion and of tyranny; the rights of kings always asserted, and those of mankind never laid aside.

"The same spirit in which it is written gave me the confidence to offer it to the virtuous consort of a king who, among so many crowned heads, enjoys almost the inestimable honor of ruling a free nation; a king who makes his power consist in being beloved, and his glory in being just.

"Our Descartes, who was the greatest philosopher in Europe before Sir Isaac Newton appeared, dedicated his 'Principles' to the celebrated Princess Palatine Elizabeth; not, said he, because she was a princess (for true philosophers respect princes, and never flatter them); but because of all his readers she understood him the best, and loved truth the most.

"I beg leave, Madam (without comparing myself to Descartes) to dedicate 'The Henriade' to your Majesty upon the like account, not only as the protectress of all arts and sciences, but as the best judge of them.

"I am, with that profound respect which is due to the greatest virtue as well as the highest rank, may it please your Majesty, your Majesty's most humble, most dutiful, and most obliged servant,

"VOLTAIRE."

The volume had all the success possible to a work written in a foreign language. The number of guinea subscribers was probably about fifteen hundred, and three octavo editions of the poem were also sold by booksellers about as fast as the books could be made. Eighty copies were subscribed for in France, where, it is to be hoped, the degenerate Sully perceived that the name of his great ancestor was taken out of the poem. The queen courteously acknowledged the honor paid her in the dedication, and King George II., as the custom was, sent the author a present of two thousand crowns. Voltaire himself mentions this pleasing event, but without telling us the value of the coins (*écus*), so named. If he meant English crowns, the present was the liberal one of five hundred pounds sterling. The fibbing Goldsmith declares that Queen Caroline sent the French poet two hundred pounds and her portrait. The Queen of Prussia, then in full intrigue to marry her daughter to the Prince of Wales, and her son, Frederic, to an English princess, sent Voltaire a medal bearing, as it seems, the Queen of England's portrait. In his letter of acknowledgment to the Prussian minister, he says he shall keep the medal all his life, because it came to him from so great a queen, and because it represented the Queen of England, who, by her vir-

tues and great qualities called to mind the Queen of Prussia. Prince Frederic of Prussia was then a lad of sixteen, and in favor with his mother. Probably he read this letter, as well as the volume that went with it. He may have noticed the concluding sentence of the letter: "The noblest recompense of my labor is to find favor with such queens as yours, and to be valued by such readers as you; for, in matters of taste and science, it is not necessary to make any distinction between crowned heads and private persons."[1]

The pecuniary result of this London "Henriade" has been usually overstated. M. Nicolardot, who has minutely investigated the subject, goes, perhaps, too far the other way, in estimating the whole profit of the two London editions of the poem at ten thousand francs.[2] I think it probable that the proceeds of the quarto edition, the octavo edition, the Essays preliminary, and "Brutus," with the gifts of king and queen, may have reached two thousand pounds sterling. It was a large sum for a man who spent little, and was well skilled in the art of investing money. During his stay in England Pope gained six thousand pounds by his translation of Homer, and Gay three thousand by his "Beggars' Opera;" but Dryden only received, as Pope said, twelve hundred pounds for his "Virgil," sixpence a line for his "Fables," ten "broad pieces" for a play, and fifty more for the acting. Thomson's "Spring" brought the author fifty guineas; Young's "Night Thoughts," two hundred and fifty; and Akenside's "Pleasures of the Imagination," one hundred and twenty. This stranger, therefore, may be considered to have done very well to get so much for the reprint of a poem in a foreign language. And during his residence of nearly three years, how much did he spend? Perhaps a hundred and fifty pounds, in all, while his revenues from France, without reckoning his suspended pensions, could not have been less than two hundred and fifty pounds a year.

He labored without pause. His "Charles XII." grew under his hands. His work upon England was in preparation, for it was never the way of this indefatigable spirit to finish one piece of work before beginning another. Of all his writings

[1] Voltaire à Ferney, page 312.

[2] Ménage et Finances de Voltaire, page 40.

the one most influential upon French minds was his Letters upon England; for they revealed to France the bewitching spectacle of a free country, and renewed the fascinating tradition of republican Rome learned at school. Lafayette records that it was reading these "Lettres Philosophiques," as they were entitled, that made him a republican at nine; and J. J. Rousseau attributes in great part to them the awakening of his late-maturing intelligence. It was a little book, almost forgotten now, merely a traveler's brief and pleasant chat respecting things and men of a foreign land. But the world is governed by a few little books. It is retarded and borne onward by little books. When the French Revolution shall be at length interpreted, in the first chapter of the work will be an account of this bright, incisive, saucy, artless, artful little book, which revealed free England to bound France. It led straight to '89. It was not necessary, as the wicked Heine remarks, for the censor to condemn this book; it would have been read without that.

Voltaire may have heard at Lord Bolingbroke's house the anecdote recorded by Spence of Robert Hooke, who said there were three reasons for preferring to live in England: The first was liberty, the second was liberty, and the third was liberty. Above all things else in England, this exile loved the freedom and toleration that prevailed there, "the noble liberty of thinking," to which he attributed whatever he found most excellent in English politics, science, and literature. To this freedom, also, he attributed the comparative exemption of England from religious antipathies. It was freedom, he thought, that enabled the numerous sects to live together in harmony. "Enter the London Exchange," he remarks, "a place more respectable than many courts. There you see the representatives of all nations assembled for a useful purpose. There the Jew, the Mahometan, and the Christian treat one another as if they were of the same religion, and give the name of infidel only to bankrupts. There the Presbyterian trusts the Anabaptist, and the Church-of-England man takes the word of a Quaker. On leaving this peaceful and free assembly, some go to the synagogue, others go to drink; this man proceeds to be baptized in a great tub in the name of the Father, the Son, and

the Holy Ghost; that man circumcises his son, and causes to be muttered over the child Hebrew words which are quite unintelligible to him; others go to their churches to await the inspiration of God with their hats on; all are content. If there was in England but one religion, its despotic sway were to be feared; if there were but two, they would cut one another's throats; but as there are thirty, they live in peace and are happy."

The Quakers, who were still a novelty in England to foreigners, attracted the particular attention of this most unquakerlike of men. He knew his public, being himself a member of it, and he therefore gave four letters upon the Quakers. Believing, as he says, that the doctrines and history of so extraordinary a people merited the study of an intelligent man, he sought the society of one of the most famous Quakers in England, a retired merchant, who lived in a cottage near London, "well built, and adorned only with its own neatness." The curious stranger visited him in his retreat.

"The Quaker was an old man of fresh complexion, who had never been sick, because he always had been continent and temperate. In my life I have never seen a presence more noble nor more engaging than his. He was dressed, like all those of his persuasion, in a coat without plaits at the sides, or buttons on the pockets and sleeves, and wore a broad-brimmed hat like those of our ecclesiastics. He received me with his hat on, and advanced towards me without making the least inclination of his body; but there was more politeness in the open and humane expression of his countenance than there is in the custom of drawing one leg behind the other, and in that of carrying in the hand what was made to cover the head. 'Friend,' said he to me, 'I see that thou art a stranger; if I can be of any use to thee, thou hast only to speak.' 'Sir,' said I to him, with a bow and a step forward, according to our custom, 'I flatter myself that my reasonable curiosity will not displease you, and that you will be willing to do me the honor to instruct me in your religion.' 'The people of thy country,' he replied, 'make too many compliments and bows, but I have never before seen one of them who had the same curiosity as thou. Come in and take dinner with me.' I still kept paying him bad compliments, because a man cannot all at once lay aside his habits; and, after a wholesome and frugal repast, which began and ended

with a prayer to God, I began to question my host. I began with the question which good Catholics have put more than once to the Huguenots: 'My dear sir,' said I, 'have you been baptized?' 'No,' replied the Quaker, 'nor my brethren either.' 'How! *Morbleu!* You are not Christians, then?' 'My friend,' he mildly rejoined, 'swear not; we do not think that Christianity consists in sprinkling water upon the head with a little salt.' 'Heh, *bon Dieu!*' said I, shocked at this impiety; 'have you forgotten, then, that Jesus Christ was baptized by John?' 'Friend, once more, no oaths,' replied the benign Quaker. 'Christ received baptism from John; but he baptized no one; we are not John's disciples, but Christ's.' 'Ah,' cried I, 'how you would be burned by the Holy Inquisition. In the name of God, my dear man, let me have you baptized!' . . . . 'Art thou circumcised?' he asked. I replied that I had not that honor. 'Very well, friend,' said he, 'thou art a Christian without being circumcised, and I without being baptized.'"

The conversation was continued to great length. In his report of it, Voltaire affects throughout the tone of the good Catholic, — Louis XV. being then King of France, and Cardinal de Fleury his prime minister. He adds that the benign Quaker conducted him, on the following Sunday, to a Quaker meeting, where he heard one of the brethren utter a long, nonsensical harangue, "half with his mouth, half with his nose," of which no one understood anything. He asked his friend why they permitted such silliness (*sottises*). The Quaker answered that they were obliged to endure it, because they could not know, when a man got up to speak, whether he was moved by the Spirit or by folly. The Quaker meeting appears to have effaced the good impressions of the sect which he had derived from his conversations with the retired merchant. Nevertheless, he proceeds to relate the history of the Quakers, and of William Penn. He concludes by remarking that the denomination, though flourishing in Pennsylvania, was on the decline in England, because the young Quakers, enriched by their fathers' industry, desired to enjoy the honors of public office, and to wear fashionable clothes, and to escape the reproach of belonging to a sect ridiculed by the world.

In his remarks upon the Church of England, Voltaire gives us a taste of his veritable self: "One can have no public em-

ployment in England, or Ireland, without being of the number of the faithful Anglicans; this reason, which is an excellent proof, has converted so many dissenters that to-day not a twentieth part of the nation is out of the pale of the Established Church." "The lower house of convocation formerly enjoyed some credit; at least, it had the privilege of meeting, of debating controverted points of doctrine, and of burning, now and then, some impious books, that is, books against themselves. The whig ministry, however, does not even permit those gentlemen to assemble, and they are reduced, in the obscurity of their parishes, to the mournful business of praying to God for a government which they would not be sorry to disturb." "The priests are almost all married. The awkwardness which they acquire at the universities, and the little acquaintance they have here with women, usually has the effect of obliging a bishop to be contented with his own wife. The priests go to the taverns sometimes, because custom permits it; and if they get drunk, it is in a serious way, and without scandal. . . . . When they are told that in France young men, known by their debaucheries and raised to the rank of bishop by female intrigues, openly make love, amuse themselves by composing love songs, give every day costly and elaborate suppers, and go from those suppers to implore the illumination of the Holy Spirit, and boldly call themselves the successors of the Apostles, then they thank God that they are Protestants. Nevertheless, they are abominable heretics, fit to be burned by all the devils, as Rabelais says; and that is the reason why I do not meddle with their affairs."

Upon the government of England Voltaire descants in a graver strain. He failed not to inform his countrymen that in England no tax could be laid except with the consent of the king, lords, and commons, and that every man was assessed, not as in France according to his rank, or rather according to his want of rank, but according to his income. Nor did he omit to remark that in England the peasant's feet were not blistered by wooden shoes. "He eats white bread; he is well clad; he fears not to increase the number of his beasts, nor to cover his roof with tiles, lest he should have to pay a higher tax the next year. You see many peasants who have five or six hundred pounds sterling a year, and yet do not disdain to con-

tinue to cultivate the lands that have enriched them, and upon which they live as freemen." He observed with pleasure that the younger sons of noble families frequently entered into commerce, — a thing unheard of then in France. "I know not, however," he slyly remarks, "which is the more useful to a state, a well-powdered lord, who knows precisely at what hour the king gets up and goes to bed, and who gives himself airs upon playing the part of slave in a minister's ante-chamber, or a merchant who enriches his country, who from his counting-room sends orders to Surat and Cairo, and contributes to the happiness of mankind."

Of the philosophers of England, Locke and Newton were those whom he studied longest and admired most. He was one of the first of his countrymen who understood the discoveries of Newton, and it was he who made them popularly known to France. Locke he frequently styles the wisest of human beings, and the only man who had ever written worthily upon metaphysics. Lord Bacon, he thought, "knew not Nature, but he knew and pointed out all the paths that lead to a knowledge of her." "He despised, early in his career, that which fools in square caps taught under the name of philosophy, in those mad-houses called *colleges;* and he did all that he could to keep them from continuing to confuse the mind by their *nature abhorring a vacuum*, their *substantial forms*, and all those words which not only ignorance rendered respectable, but which a ridiculous blending with religion rendered sacred. He is the father of experimental philosophy." All of Voltaire's remarks upon Bacon, Locke, and Newton show that he felt the peculiar importance of each of them.

Shakespeare, as we have seen, he could not judge aright. He never could. Ducis, the first author who "adapted" Shakespeare to the French stage, was misled by Voltaire's estimate, as given in the Letters; and, indeed, it is only in our own time that France has come to the full possession and enjoyment of Shakespeare. For a century, Frenchmen generally accepted Voltaire's judgment. "Shakespeare," he told his countrymen, "created the English theatre. He had a genius full of force and fecundity, of nature and sublimity; but without the least spark of good taste, and without the slightest knowledge of the rules. I am going to say something bold,

but true: it is, that the merit of this author has ruined the English drama. There are such beautiful scenes, there are passages so grand and so terrible in those monstrous farces which they call tragedies, that his pieces have always been played with great success. Time, which alone gives reputation to men, renders at length their faults respectable. Most of the odd and gigantesque notions of this author have acquired, at the end of two hundred years, the right to pass for sublime. Modern authors have almost all copied them; but that which succeeded in Shakespeare is hissed in them." He proceeds to remark that England has produced but one tragedy worthy to be ranked with the master-pieces of the French stage, and that was Addison's "Cato." The writings of Voltaire contain, perhaps, a hundred allusions to Shakespeare, but most of them in this tone; and in almost the last piece he ever wrote, he still speaks of him as an inspired barbarian. In one of his essays, in 1761, after giving a ludicrous outline of "Hamlet," he enters into an inquiry how it could be that a nation which had produced the "Cato" of Addison could endure such crudities. This is his reason: "The chairmen, the sailors, the hackney-coachmen, the shopmen, the butchers, and even the clergy, in England, are passionately fond of shows. Give them cock-fights, bull-fights, gladiatorial combats, funerals, witchcraft, duels, hangings, ghosts, and they run in throngs to see them; and there is more than one lord as curious in these things as the populace. The people of London find in the tragedies of Shakespeare all that can please such a taste as this. The courtiers were obliged to follow the torrent."

Two or three considerations may lessen our astonishment at Voltaire's blindness to Shakespeare. One is that he spoke of Shakespeare very much as the great lights of English literature, from Dryden to Goldsmith, were accustomed to speak of him. Dryden styled "Troilus and Cressida" "a heap of rubbish." Dryden thought he had converted the "Tempest" into a tolerable play when he had spoiled it. Pope spoke of a forgotten play of the Earl of Dorset's as "written in a much purer style than Shakespeare's in his first plays." Bolingbroke, as Voltaire mentions, agreed with him upon the irregularities of Shakespeare. Goldsmith speaks of the "amazing, irregular beauties of Shakespeare." When George III. said

to Miss Burney that most of Shakespeare was "sad stuff," he probably expressed an opinion that prevailed in the higher circles of his time. There is reason to conclude that, when Voltaire's Letters upon the English appeared in London, his remarks upon Shakespeare were approved by the frequenters of such houses as those of Bolingbroke, Dodington, and Pope.

The customs of the French stage, in Voltaire's day, furnish some further explanation of his insensibility to Shakespeare. The tragic drama in France was a kind of drawing-room pastime, — decorous, artificial, high-flown. The common people attended the theatre only on festive days, when free admissions were given. To have introduced into a play the name of a prince of the reigning family would have been deemed a very great audacity. No author presumed to do it till Voltaire, emboldened, as he says, by Shakespeare's example, brought upon the scene characters famous in the history of France. At the same time, it was against the "rules" to present to the courtly audiences of that day peasants, mechanics, or any plebeian except a soldier, a *valet de chambre*, or a waiting-maid. No one could kill another on the stage. The only killing permitted was decorous and classical suicide. The entire action of the play was required to be exhibited in the same apartment, and in the space of time occupied in its representation. Subject to these rules, — subject, also, to the restraints of rhyme, — what could a French tragedy be but a series of stately dialogues? Accustomed to such a drama as this, Voltaire was shocked at scenes like those of the gravediggers in "Hamlet," the fool in "Lear," the cobblers in "Julius Cæsar." When his "Tancrède" was performed, in 1760, the leading actress implored his consent to the erection of a scaffold upon the stage, draped in black. "My friend," he replied, "we must fight the English, not imitate their barbarous theatre. Let us study their philosophy; let us trample under our feet, as they do, infamous prejudices; let us drive out the Jesuits and wolves; let us no longer stupidly oppose inoculation and the attraction of gravitation; let us learn from them how to cultivate land; but let us beware of copying their savage drama." Moreover, his self-love was interested. If Shakespeare was right, Voltaire was wrong. If "Hamlet" was a good tragedy, what was "Œdipe"?

He succeeded little better with Milton. In many passages of his works he ridicules the "odd and extravagant conceptions" of that poet, to whose merit, however, he was not wholly insensible. "Paradise Lost," he concludes, "is a work more peculiar than natural, fuller of imagination than of grace, and of boldness than judgment; of which the subject is wholly ideal, and which seems not made for man." He admired the "majestic strokes with which Milton dared to depict God, and the character still more brilliant which he gives the Devil." The description of the Garden of Eden pleased him, as well as the "innocent loves of Adam and Eve." But when he comes to speak of the combats between the angels and the fallen spirits, of the mountains hurled upon each other, and of the great gathering of the devils in a hall, he can see in those passages only something barbaric and ludicrous. Milton, he remarks, was a bad prose-writer, and combated the apologists of King Charles as a ferocious beast fights a savage. In all that he says of Milton, we perceive the influence of the English circle which he frequented. So Bolingbroke spoke of the author of "Paradise Lost."

It was during Voltaire's stay in England that news was brought to the literary circle that a daughter of Milton was living in London, old, infirm, and very poor. "In a quarter of an hour," he tells us, "she was rich." He thought of this incident, thirty-five years later, when he was soliciting subscriptions for the edition of Corneille which he published for the benefit of the granddaughter of that poet, whom he had adopted and was educating. He used it as a spur to the zeal of those who were aiding him. Milton's daughter died soon after, but not before she had related many particulars of her father's life and habits, which Voltaire eagerly gathered and afterwards recorded.

The English comedy of that time appears to have afforded the stranger much enjoyment. He complains, however, of the indecency of the popular comedies. But he appears to have been shocked only at the indecency of the words employed, not at all at the enormous and hideous indecency of the events exhibited. "We are bound to consider," he remarks, "that, if the Romans permitted gross expressions in the satires which only a few people read, they allowed no improper words upon

the stage. For, as La Fontaine says, 'Chaste are the ears, though the eyes be loose.' In a word, no one should pronounce in public a word which a modest woman may not repeat." Here we have the explanation of the fact that an Englishman in Paris and a Frenchman in London are equally astounded at the indecency of the plays which they attend. The Frenchman brings to the theatre fastidious ears, and the Englishman chaste eyes. The third and fourth acts of "Tartuffe" contain nothing offensive to a French audience, though it would be shocked at some of the words in the first act of Othello. An Englishwoman can endure a gross word or two in the midst of a scene otherwise proper, but would be inclined to run out of the theatre upon the performance of a whole act of decorous seduction which threatens at every moment to be successful; the husband of the lady being hidden under the table, and appearing only when the author has exhausted every other resource.

Apropos of "Tartuffe," Voltaire gives an unexpected reason for the failure in England of a comedy which has given to the English stage so many of its religious hypocrites, and to Dickens perhaps his Uriah Heep. He says that before there can be false devotees there must be true ones; and one of the great advantages of the English nation is that it has no Tartuffes. "The English scarcely know the name of devotee; but they know well that of honest man. You do not see there any imbeciles who put their souls into the keeping of others, nor any of those petty ambitious men who establish in a neighborhood a despotic sway over silly women formerly wanton and always weak, and over men weaker and more contemptible than they."

Voltaire concludes his review of English literature by remarking, that, as the English had profited much from works in the French language, so the French, in their turn, ought to borrow from them. "We have both," he adds, "we and the English, followed the Italians, who are in everything our masters, and whom we have surpassed in some things. I know not to which of the three nations we ought to give the preference; but happy he who knows how to enjoy their different merits." In one particular, however, he awards the palm to England: England honored literature and learning most. In

France, he says, Addison might have been member of the Academy, and might have obtained a pension by the influence of a woman; or he might have been brought into trouble under the pretext that there might be found in his "Cato" some reflections upon the porter of a man in power. In England, he was secretary of state; Newton was master of the Mint; Congreve held an important office; Prior was plenipotentiary; Swift was dean in Ireland, and much more considered there than the primate; and if Pope's religion kept him out of office, it did not prevent his gaining two hundred thousand francs by his translation of Homer. "What encourages most the men of letters in England is the consideration in which they are held. The portrait of the prime minister is to be found hanging above the mantel-piece of his own study; but I have seen that of Mr. Pope in twenty houses."

Pope's position in the world of letters in 1728, the year of the "Dunciad," was indeed most brilliant; and I may almost add, terrible; for the man who can destroy a career or brand a name by a couplet, wields a terrible power. Voltaire marked the "Dunciad" well, and treasured up the hint it gave him. He could not issue *lettres de cachet*, but he saw Pope wreak a deadlier revenge upon his foes than ministers and mistresses did when they consigned men to the Bastille. He watched the career of Pope after he left England, and kept his notice of him in the Letters written up to the date of later editions.

"Pope [he wrote] is, I believe, the most elegant, the most correct, the most harmonious poet whom the English have possessed. He has reduced the sharp notes of the English trumpet to the soft tones of the flute. It is possible to translate him because he is extremely clear, and because his subjects for the most part are such as interest all mankind. . . . . Pope's 'Essay on Man' appears to me to be the most beautiful didactic poem, the most useful, the most sublime, that has ever been written in any language. It is true, the basis of the work is found entire in the 'Characteristics of Lord Shaftesbury,' and I do not know why M. Pope gives credit only to M. de Bolingbroke, without saying a word of the celebrated Shaftesbury, pupil of Locke. As everything appertaining to metaphysics has been thought in all the ages and by every people who have cultivated their minds, this system much resembles that of Leibnitz, who

maintains that of all possible worlds God was bound to choose the best, and that in this best it was very necessary that the irregularities of our globe and the follies of its inhabitants should have their place. It resembles also the idea of Plato, that, in the endless chain of beings, our earth, our body, our soul, are in the number of necessary links. But neither Leibnitz nor Pope admits the changes which Plato imagines to have happened to those links — to our souls and to our bodies. Plato spoke like a poet in his scarcely intelligible prose, and Pope speaks like a philosopher in his admirable verses. He says that from the beginning everything was as it ought to be.

"I was flattered, I confess it, that he coincides with me in something which I wrote several years ago: 'You are astonished that God has made man so limited, so ignorant, so little happy. Why are you not astonished that he did not make him more limited, more ignorant, more unhappy?' When a Frenchman and an Englishman think the same thing, they certainly must be right."

He mentions in this connection that Pope could not converse with him in the French language, though Racine the younger had published a French letter from Pope. "I know," he says, "and all the men of letters in England know, that Pope, with whom I lived a good deal in England, could scarcely read French, that he spoke not one word of our tongue, that he never wrote a letter in French, that he was incapable of doing it, and that, if he wrote that letter to the son of our Racine, God, toward the end of his life, must suddenly have bestowed upon him the gift of tongues, to reward him for having composed so admirable a work as the 'Essay on Man.'"

So passed his exile in England. So our student used his university. The *régime* had better kept him at home; but, since it did not, he made the best and the most of the opportunity.

During his residence abroad he did not lose his hold upon France. The French ambassador, we perceive, was well disposed toward him. There was already a considerable French colony in London, with head-quarters at the Rainbow coffee-house in Mary-le-bone. His old master, the Abbé d'Olivet, and his future enemy, Maupertuis, were both in London during his stay. The frequenters of the Rainbow had not done talking, in 1728, of Mademoiselle de Livri's

romantic marriage with the Marquis de Gouvernet. Stranded in London, a member of a bankrupt company of French actors, living on charity at a tavern, perhaps at the Rainbow itself, this young lady, whom Voltaire had introduced to the stage years before, had captivated a French marquis, and in 1727 was married to him, and was then living in Paris as a *grande dame*. Voltaire could have heard full particulars at the Rainbow, and he used them by and by as material for his comedy of "L'Ecossaise." With old French friends, too, he kept relations, writing once, and in the old familiar manner, to the Duchess du Maine.

In July, 1727, as the royal archives show, he received permission to visit Paris for three months on business, but did not go. Perhaps the business was arranged without him. If so, it was not with his brother Armand's good will. He could not be friends with Armand, though the Channel rolled between them. In June, 1727, a few weeks before he obtained permission to go to Paris, he wrote to Thieriot: "You need not suspect me of having set foot in your country, nor even of having thought of doing so. My brother, especially, is the last man to whom such a secret could be confided, as much from his indiscreet character as from the ugly (*vilaine*) manner in which he has treated me since I have been in England. By all sorts of methods I have tried to soften the pedantic clownishness and insolent egotism with which he has overwhelmed me during these two years past. I confess to you, in the bitterness of my heart, that his insupportable conduct toward me has been one of my keenest afflictions."

Armand has left us no means of knowing his side of the story. Deacon Pâris had just died of self-torture in France, and the first miracle wrought at his bier bears date May 3, 1727; a miracle in which Armand Arouet believed with besotted and adoring faith. Strange spectacle! One brother in Paris gloating over tales of Convulsionist miracles, and the other brother in London writing "Charles XII.," "Brutus," and "Lettres Philosophiques," acting powerfully upon the intelligence of Europe, and holding up free England for France to see! What Darwin will explain to us so mysterious a fact in the natural history of our race?

CHAPTER XXIII.

RETURN TO FRANCE.

His exile was long for such an offense as he had committed. When the spring of 1729 opened, more than three years had passed since he had challenged the Chevalier de Rohan in the box of Madame Lecouvreur. He was doing very well in England, his richly endowed university, getting knowledge and winning prizes. But students are not apt to settle at their university, and no Frenchman so French as he was could be at home out of France. He did not like beer, nor the practice of drinking healths, nor London fogs; and on one occasion, it seems, some rough Londoners hustled him, and showed him how rude Britons in Hogarth's time felt toward the frog-eating French, their "natural enemies." He mounted a stone and harangued the mob: "Brave Englishmen, am I not already unhappy enough in not having been born among you?" He addressed them so eloquently, Wagnière records, that they "wished, at last, to carry him home on their shoulders!"[1]

His portfolio, too, as we have seen, was getting full of things, printed and manuscript, that he yearned to give to a susceptible French public: a better "Henriade," a printed "Brutus," an outlined "Julius Cæsar," "English Letters" in a state of forwardness, and, above all, a "History of Charles XII.," gathered from eye-witnesses, compact with every element of interest, a fresher subject to that generation than Bonaparte was to Sir Walter Scott's, a work which he felt would pervade Europe as fast as printers could print copies. Other schemes were in his mind, for which he had made preparations: a *something* that should commemorate the picturesque and eventful reign of Louis XIV., and certain plays in which he would try Shakespearean innovations upon a French audience.

[1] 1 Mémoires sur Voltaire, 23.

Knowledge is the food of genius. His university of England had nourished him with new and fascinating knowledge of many kinds, and we see in his letters that he had a patriot's desire, as well as an author's ambition, to make his native land a sharer in his newly found treasures. Why, then, so long in England? Was the court implacable? The queen, Paris-Duverney, Richelieu, De Prie, Bourbon, all of whom had smiled upon him and done him substantial service, could not their influence avail in his behalf? No more than that of the lackeys who served them! The serene and astute old Cardinal de Fleury had driven them from court, and put the ablest of them, Paris-Duverney, into the Bastille, where he had been in rigorous confinement almost as long as Voltaire had been in exile.

Under personal government, as in the game of chess, the object of intrigue is to capture the king; and, as a means to that end, it is an important point to get the queen. But the taking of the queen is not always decisive, because the queen is not always on convenient terms with her husband. Paris-Duverney as financier may be almost said to have saved the monarchy; his and his three brothers' hard-headed sense being the antidote to the bane of John Law's inflation. But, as court intriguer, he was not successful; for in that vocation a knowledge of human nature is essential, which financiers do not usually possess. He gave France a queen, but that queen was not able to give him the king.

An intrigue of Louis XIV.'s cabinet drew those four remarkable brothers Paris from the obscurity of an Alpine hamlet, near Geneva, where their father kept an inn and cultivated land; a man of repute in his neighborhood; his four sons, all large, handsome men, intelligent, energetic, and punctiliously honest. Antoine Paris, Claude Paris, Joseph Paris, and Jean Paris were their real names; but the French indulge their own fancy in naming themselves, and the most eminent of these four, Joseph Paris, is only known in books as Paris-Duverney. Literary men should deal tenderly with his name and memory, for he it was who helped make the fortune of two of their fraternity, Voltaire and Beaumarchais. It is doubtful if the world had ever known its "Figaro" if Paris-Duverney had not sent Beaumarchais to Spain with a pocket full of money to speculate with.

It was a cabinet intrigue, I say, that gave the Alpine innkeeper and his four fine boys an opportunity to show the great world the metal they were made of. Minister-of-Finance Pontchartrain had an interest in frustrating Minister-of-War Louvois, both being in the service of Louis XIV., and France being at war with Savoy. Pontchartrain had induced the king to give the contract for supplying the army to a new company offering to do the business cheaper. Louvois, offended at this interference, caused the army to move in such a way and at such a time that the contractors could not supply it. Remonstrance was unavailing. "Have thirty thousand sacks of flour on the frontier in depot, on a certain day, or your head shall answer it," was all the concession that could be wrung from the minister of war. The contractors' agent, in despair, opened his heart to his landlord, the Sieur Paris, known to be a man of resources, whose inn lay near the route by which provisions must pass. "Wait," said the landlord, in substance, "till the boys come in from the fields." A family consultation was held; the sons agreed that the thing could be done, and that they could do it. In this operation, as in all subsequent ones, the brothers acted together, with common purse, plan, and interest, each doing the part which nature and experience had best fitted him for. One brother scoured the country for mules; another borrowed the grain at Lyons; another arranged the lines of the laden beasts, and had them conducted to the frontier by paths known only to Alpine peasants. The business, in short, was accomplished, and the contractors gave these vigorous mountaineers such rewards and chances that before many years were past, they, too, became contractors and capitalists. It was chiefly they who supplied the armies of Louis XIV. while Marlborough was defeating them year after year, and on two or three or four occasions it was their amazing energy and disinterested patriotism that saved defeated armies from annihilation; freely expending all their own capital, and, what is much harder to such men, putting at hazard the millions borrowed on the sole security of their name and honor. When France issued from that long contest, in 1714, with her finances in chaos inconceivable, it was still these brothers who began to reduce them to order. Inflator Law drove them into brief exile, and ex-

aggerated the financial evil tenfold. The universal collapse of February, 1720, brought them back; and then, by five years of constant, well directed, well concerted toil, the proofs of which exist to this day, they put the finances of the kingdom into tolerable order, and so enabled the frugal, industrious French people to utilize the twenty years of peace which Cardinal de Fleury was about to give them. And thus it was that Paris-Duverney, the innkeeper's son, came to be, in 1725, the confidential secretary of the Duke of Bourbon, prime minister, as well as the trusted counselor of his mistress, the Marquise de Prie.

But in placing the daughter of a king-out-of-place upon the throne of France, he ventured beyond his depth. The intrigue both succeeded and failed. Their candidate, indeed, married the boy king, and Paris-Duverney induced her to give her "poor Voltaire" a pension of three hundred dollars a year; but when the moment came for her to deliver the young king into the hands of the Duke of Bourbon and his mistress, she was grieved to discover that she, young wife as she was, was no match for the old priest. The king liked his tutor, who was a singularly agreeable and placid old gentleman, and never asked one favor for himself or for a relation. The Duke of Bourbon was neither pleasing in his appearance nor winning in his demeanor. The king felt at home with the preceptor, felt safe with him, relished his company, and had perfect confidence in his fidelity.

The explosion occurred a few days after the departure of Voltaire for England in 1726. There were two parties at court playing for the possession of the king: one, headed by this quiet and good-tempered old priest; the other, by the Duke of Bourbon, aided conspicuously and actively by Madame de Prie, who in turn was directed by Paris-Duverney. The mistress was too aggressive, and too hungry for money. She was ill-spoken of out-of-doors; and, within the palace, she had many enemies. Fleury at length spoke to the prime minister, and advised him to end the scandal by sending the Marquise de Prie from court. The mistress, who was also *dame du palais* to the queen, resolved, "according to the rules of court warfare," to send away the preceptor.[1] The contest,

[1] Siècle de Louis XV., par Voltaire, chapter iii

short and decisive, had these results: the Duke of Bourbon was dismissed and "exiled" to his own château at Chantilly; Madame de Prie was exiled to her province, where she soon died in "the convulsions of despair;" Paris-Duverney was consigned to an insalubrious apartment in the Bastille; his chief clerk to a dungeon in the same château; his brothers were exiled; the Cardinal de Fleury became prime minister, drove many harpies from court, and for twenty years governed France with the minimum of waste possible under that *régime*. He was as avaricious for the king, St. Simon remarks, as he was regardless of personal emolument. Incidentally, our exile was affected; for his friends were in disgrace and could not help him.

The queen herself was formally placed under the control of the cardinal whom she had tried to displace. "I pray you, madame," wrote the king of sixteen to the queen of twenty-three, "and if necessary I command you, to do all that the bishop [De Fleury] may tell you to do from me, as if I had said it myself." For some time she was under a manifest cloud. During Voltaire's secret visit to Paris in the summer of 1726, he ventured, it seems, to go in some disguise to the theatre when the king and queen were to attend; the play being Racine's "Britannicus." "The king and queen," he wrote forty years after, "arrived an hour later than usual. The whole audience perceived that the queen had been crying; and I remember that when Narcisse pronounced this verse, 'Why delay, my lord, to repudiate her?' almost every one present looked toward the queen to observe the effect." This was at the crisis of the intrigue, and a few days after, as Voltaire adds, "Paris-Duverney was no longer master of the state."

The queen's persistence in presenting France with girls, when a boy was so intensely desired, did not help her friends in their time of trouble. The pair of girls with which she began in 1726 might have been pardoned, since their youthful sire was so proud of them; but a third princess in 1728 was resented as an impertinence, and not a gun saluted her arrival. While there is life there is hope. The saddened queen, as soon as she was well enough to go out, went in magnificent and solemn state to Notre Dame, attended by all her

ladies in four eight-horse carriages, and escorted by twenty guards, several pages and twelve footmen, to pray the Virgin to bestow upon her the honor of giving a dauphin to France. An immense concourse of people gathered in the streets to see her pass upon this errand. As she approached the church, a cardinal in his splendid robes, attended by a multitude of priests, advanced to the door to receive her. Advancing along the nave, she ascended a platform, and kneeling upon a cushion said her prayer, while thousands of spectators, upon their knees, joined in the entreaty. She rose, and took a seat prepared for her; after which a grand mass was said, accompanied with new and beautiful music composed for the occasion. At the conclusion of the ceremony she retired to an apartment adjacent, where, we are informed, she refreshed herself with a bowl of broth, and then returned to the palace with the same pomp, followed by the blessings of a countless multitude of people. Thirteen months after, to the inconceivable joy of France, the wished-for prince was born! Every bell in Paris rang a merry peal. Cannons were fired. For three evenings in succession Paris was ablaze with fire-works and illuminations, and on the following Sunday huge bonfires were lighted in every part of the city. The boy whose birth gave such delight did not live to reign over France; but he was the father of that Louis XVI. who perished during the French Revolution.

The cardinal minister was slow to forgive the man who had come near consigning him to the obscurity of a country bishopric. Paris-Duverney remained a prisoner nearly two years, and it was not till near the close of 1728, that the four brothers Paris were restored to liberty, so far as to be allowed to live together fifty miles from the capital. Other circumstances were favorable to the exile, and he resolved, early in 1729, without seeking a formal permission, which might have been refused, to venture to approach Paris as near as St. Germain-en-Laye, fifteen miles from the capital. "Write no more to your wandering friend," he wrote to Thieriot, March 10, 1729, "for at an early moment you will see him appear. Prepare to come at the first summons."

Rich booty as he brought with him from a foreign land, he did not return as a conqueror. About the middle of March,

a solitary traveler reached St. Germain-en-Laye, who called himself Monsieur Sansons, and took lodgings at the house of one Chatillon, wig-maker, Rue des Récollets, opposite to the monastery of the fathers so named. The new-comer dispatched a note to Thieriot: "You must ask for *Sansons*. He inhabits a hole in this barrack, and there is another for you," as well as "a bad bed and short commons." The friends were quickly reunited, and M. Sansons remained for several days in his hole hidden from mankind. The Richelieu château was not far off. That of the Duchess du Maine was within easy reach. Versailles was near. Obscure allusions in the letters indicate that a few individuals of his old circle were aware of his return, and took an interest in his safety. Near the end of March he ventured to take up his abode in Paris, at the house of one of his father's old clerks, where he saw no one but the "few indispensables." Every few days he changed his abode.

Richelieu, Thieriot, and other friends, all joined in advising him to apply for a royal warrant annulling the order of exile. April 7th he writes to Thieriot a sprightly letter, half in French, half in English, telling him that he will yield to their solicitations. He liked to mix his languages; this very note containing three. It is dated thus: "*Die Jovis, quem barbari Galli nuncupant Jeudi* (7 *Avril*), 1729." He often makes similar reflections upon the French names of the days and months. The most material sentence of this note runs thus: "Puis donc que vous voulez tous que je sois ici avec un *warrant* signé Louis, go to Saint-Germain; I write to the Vizier Maurepas, in order to get leave to drag my chain in Paris." The minister gave him the warrant, and he was again a recognized inhabitant of his native city.

Already he had resumed work upon his "Charles XII." As soon as he had a room to work in, he must have begun; for with this note of April 7th, written eight days after he had reached Paris, he *returns* two great volumes (the "Diets of Poland," and a "History of Alexander the Great"), and asks Thieriot to find him an account of the topography of Ukraine and Little-Tartary. Assiduous Thieriot sends him maps of those regions, and is rewarded by being asked to find "a very detailed and very correct map of the world;" also a "Life of Peter the Great." So busy was he with this interesting work

that he could not find time to dine with Thieriot even on a Sunday afternoon, though engaged to do so. "Voltaire," he writes May 15th, "is a man of honor and of his word, if he is not a man of pleasure. He will not be able to take his place at table, but will drop in at the end of your orgie, along with that fool of a Charles XII." The orgie probably concluded with a reading of the chapter finished in the morning. On another occasion he tells Thieriot that he *will* dine with him "dead or alive."

After a short period, then, of apprehension and of wandering from one obscure lodging to another, we find him settled, restored to his rights and to his friends, hard at work upon his book, and sharing in the social life of Paris. He soon set Thieriot at work getting his pensions restored, and his arrears paid up; in which they succeeded, minus the deductions imposed on all pensioners by a cardinal avaricious for his king. Nor did he delay to put to good use those two or three thousand solid guineas that he brought from England. Accident helped him to a capital speculation. Supping one evening this spring with a lady of his circle, the conversation turned upon a lottery recently announced by the controller-general, Desforts, for liquidating certain onerous city annuities. La Condamine, the mathematician, who was one of the guests, remarked that any one who should buy all the tickets of this lottery would gain a round million. Voltaire silently reflected upon this statement. At the close of the feast he hurried away to moneyed friends, — doubtless to the brothers Paris, now restored to their career in Paris, who were closely allied to the richest banker of the day, Samuel Bernard. A company was formed; the tickets were all bought, and the prizes demanded. The controller-general, overwhelmed with confusion at this exposure of his blunder, refused to pay. The company appealed to the council, who decided in their favor. Voltaire gained a large sum by this happy stroke, exaggerated by one chronicler to half a million francs. He made, it is true, an enemy of the minister, who was *dévot;* and he deemed it best to disappear from Paris, and spend some weeks with the Duke of Richelieu at the waters of Plombières; as lucky men with as go from Wall Street to Saratoga. But Desforts was soon after displaced, and the poet could safely return. Paris-Du

verney did not forget the favor done him on this occasion, and before many years had rolled away he was able to make a substantial return in kind,

Voltaire never wanted money again, and never missed a good opportunity to increase his store. Later in the year 1729 we see him dropping work, starting in a post-chaise at midnight for Nancy, a hundred and fifty miles distant, — a ride of two nights and a day, — for the purpose of buying shares in public funds of the Duke of Lorraine. Arriving more dead than alive, he was informed that, by order of the duke, no shares were to be sold to strangers. But, as he related to President Hénault, "after pressing solicitations, they let me subscribe for fifty shares (which were delivered to me eight days after), by reason of the happy resemblance of my name to that of one of his Royal Highness's gentlemen. I profited by the demand for this paper promptly enough. I have trebled my gold, and trust soon to enjoy my doubloons with people like you." Ever after, as long as he lived, he was in the habit of performing feats of this kind; as attentive to business as though he had no literature; as devoted to literature as though he had no business. His life was to be henceforth, as it had been hitherto, a continuous warfare with powers that wielded the resources of a kingdom. He had need to provide himself with the sinews of war.

Full of his English ideas, it was inevitable that he should speak freely and warmly among his friends of the charms, the power, the safety of freedom; and it appears, too, that he now saw more clearly than before that there could be no freedom in a country in which existed an order of men clothed with authority to define what men must believe. The citadel of despotism, he discerned, was held by the hierarchy, whose power was founded upon human credulity. The lieutenant of police, we are told, sent for him soon after his return from England, and admonished him concerning the freedoms of his conversation. "I do not believe," replied Voltaire, "that it is designed to hinder me from speaking freely in the houses of my friends. I write nothing, I print nothing, which can render me liable to censure or pursuit on the part of the government." The lieutenant is said to have interrupted him here. "Whatever you may write," said that officer, "you will never

succeed in destroying the Christian religion." To which Voltaire replied, "We shall see."

In resuming his social habits, he called upon the Marquise de Gouvernet, once Mademoiselle de Livri, the companion of his merry days, his *protégée* and pupil in the dramatic art. Her Swiss refusing to admit him, he sent her an epistle in the airiest, gayest, sauciest verse, recalling the time when, in an old hackney coach, without lackeys or ornaments, adorned only with her own charms, content with a bad soup, she had given herself to the lover who had consecrated to her his life. All the pomps and elegancies of her rank, he tells her, — "that large, white-haired Swiss who lies at your door without ceasing," "those brilliants hanging from your ears, those fragile marvels of your abode, — all, all are not worth one kiss that you gave in your youth." "The tender Loves and Laughs tremble to appear under your magnificent canopies. Alas! I have seen them get in by the window and play in your shabby lodgings." She did not resent his witty impudence. She kept the portrait he had given her in their foolish, happy days, for nearly sixty years. They were destined to meet again.

And so passed the first year of his return. He enjoyed comparative peace, because, as he said to the lieutenant of police, he printed nothing, published nothing. Let us see now how it fared with him when he resumed his vocation.

CHAPTER XXIV.

PURSUIT OF LITERATURE UNDER DIFFICULTIES.

"La Henriade" was at length allowed to be sold in France. The applause of Europe, the patronage of friendly courts, the popularity of the work at home, had their effect upon a ministry every member of which, except one, seems to have enjoyed and admired the poem. There is reason to think that the Cardinal de Fleury himself did so. This wondrous *régime* often affords us the spectacle of an administration suppressing a book which nearly every member delighted in, and suppressing it, perhaps, with the more energy because they delighted in it. "La Henriade" was, however, only tolerated. "This new edition," the author wrote, in 1731, "of the poem of 'La Henriade,' has been issued at Paris by the tacit permission of M. Chauvelin, Master of Requests, and of M. Hérault, Lieutenant of Police, without the Keeper of the Seals yet knowing the least thing about it." There is another sentence in the same letter which the reader will do well to bear in mind: "All M. de Chauvelin desires is to give no pretext to complaints against himself;" and M. de Chauvelin was the *protégé* and confidant of the Cardinal de Fleury. Of all the cabinet he stood nearest to the prime minister. Henceforth, then, "La Henriade" was a tolerated book in France.

The tragedy of "Brutus," printed in England in 1727, and since revised, was offered to the manager in December, 1729. The author invited the actors to dinner, with Thieriot and one or two other friends. After dinner, he read the play; which was accepted, put in rehearsal, and announced for presentation. Some places were sold for the opening night, when suddenly the author withdrew the piece, giving two reasons for so doing. "I am assured on all sides," he wrote to Thieriot, "that M. de Crébillon [dramatic author]

has gone to seek M. de Chabot [Chevalier de Rohan], and has formed a plot to damn 'Brutus,' which I am unwilling to give them the pleasure of doing. *Besides*, I do not think the piece worthy of the public. So, my friend, if you have engaged seats, send and get your money back." The second reason French writers think was the controlling one, since Crébillon was .not given to intrigue, and the author of "Brutus" fell to revising the play again.

In March, 1730, occurred the sudden death of the actress, Adrienne Lecouvreur, aged twenty-eight. She played for the last time, March 15th, in Voltaire's "Œdipe," and played, despite her disorder, with much of her accustomed force and brilliancy. In accordance with the barbarous custom of the time there was an afterpiece, in which she also appeared; and she went home from the scene of her triumphs to die after four days of anguish. Voltaire hastened to her bedside, and watched near her during her last struggle for life; and when she was seized with the convulsions that preceded her death, he held her in his arms and received her last breath. Being an actress, and dying without absolution, she was denied "Christian burial," and the gates of every recognized burial place in France were closed against her wasted body, the poor relics of a gifted and bewitching woman, whom all that was distinguished and splendid in the society of her native land had loved to look upon. At night her body was carried in an old coach (*fiacre*) a little way out of town, just beyond the paved streets, to a spot near the Seine now covered by the house No. 109 Rue de Bourgogne. The *fiacre* was followed by one friend, two street-porters, and a squad of the city watch. There her remains were buried, the grave was filled up, and the spot remained unenclosed and unmarked until the city grew over it and concealed it from view.

The brilliant world of which she had been a part heard of this unseemly burial with such horror, such disgust, such rage, such "stupor," as we can with difficulty imagine, because all those ties of tenderness and pride that bind families and communities together are more sensitive, if not stronger, in France than with our ruder, robuster race. The idea of not having friendly and decorous burial, of not lying down

at last with kindred and fellow citizens in a place appointed for the dead, of being taken out at night and buried at a corner of a road like a dead cat, was and is utterly desolating to the French people. Voltaire, for example, could never face it; he lived and died dreading it.

And the effect of the great actress's surreptitious burial was increased by various circumstances. That gifted woman possessed all the virtues except virtue; and, unhappily, virtue the gay world of Paris did not care for. Nature and history pronounce virtue, whether in man or woman, the indispensable preliminary to well-being, and the church was right in so regarding it. But Paris loved rather to repeat that she had pledged all her jewels to help her lover (*one* of her lovers), Maurice de Saxe, son of Augustus, king of Poland. Paris remarked that, if she had not partaken of the sacraments, she had at least left a thousand francs to the poor of her parish. The gay world dwelt much upon her noble disinterestedness in refusing to receive the addresses of Count d'Argental, though that infatuated young man loved her to the point of being willing to sacrifice his career to her. That she had borne two children to two lovers, that she had expended the precious treasure of her life and genius in a very few years of joyless excitement, that she had lived in utter disregard of the unchangeable conditions of human welfare, as well as those of the highest artistic excellence, — who thought of that? Who *could* think of that in connection with such an outrage upon her wasted remains?

Voltaire, who owed so much to this brilliant woman who owed so much to him, was profoundly moved. To the assembled company of actors, her companions in glory and in shame, he said: "Announce to the world that you will not exercise your profession, until you, the paid servants of the king, are treated like other citizens in the king's service." They promised him; but who was to maintain them in the interval? The chiefs of the company only received from a thousand to two thousand francs a year. "They promised," he wrote thirty years after, "but did nothing further in the matter. They preferred dishonor with a little money, to honor, which would have been worth more to them."[1]

[1] Voltaire to Mademoiselle Clairon, August 17, 1761.

It so chanced that a few months later, in the same year, died Anne Oldfield, for many years the glory of the London stage; who also left two children to two of her lovers. She was buried with public ceremonial in Westminster Abbey, her remains followed by persons eminent in rank and in gifts. It was when Voltaire heard of Mrs. Oldfield's honorable obsequies that his feelings found expression in his well-known poem on the death of Mademoiselle Lecouvreur, which expressed the feelings of the public also. In Greece, he cried, such a woman would have had an altar! Living, France hung in rapture upon her lips; dead, she is a criminal! "Ah, shall I always see my feeble nation blasting what it admires, sleeping under the dominance of superstition? O London, happy land, where no art is despised, where every kind of success has its glory, where the conqueror of Tallard, son of Victory, the sublime Dryden, the wise Addison, the charming Ophils (Oldfield), and the immortal Newton, all have their place in the Temple of Glory!"

This poem, handed about in the drawing-rooms for many weeks in manuscript, attracted the notice of the ministry at length, and endangered the safety of the author for a while. Fortunately, he was absent from Paris at the time, and could take measures to avert the peril. His indignation, he confessed, may have carried him too far, but he thought it "pardonable in a man who had been her admirer, her friend, her lover, and who, besides, was a poet." So, perhaps, thought the ministry, and the storm blew over.

It was during this year, 1730, that he began that burlesque poem upon Jeanne Darc, "La Pucelle," which for thirty years disturbed his repose, very much as a packet of gunpowder might disturb the repose of a man who was obliged to keep it in his writing desk. The work was suggested at the supper-table of the Duke of Richelieu; where, the conversation turning upon the exploits of the Maid of Orleans, some one mentioned Chapelain's heroic poem on the subject, which was satirized so severely by Boileau, and the guests began to quote absurd bits from it, greatly to the general amusement. After this had gone on for some time, the following conversation occurred between the giver of the feast and Voltaire:—

RICHELIEU. — "I bet that if you had treated this subject, you would have produced a better work, and you would not have found it necessary, in order to magnify your principal character, to make a saint of her."

VOLTAIRE. — "I doubt much if I should have been able to make a good serious work of it. In the history of Jeanne Darc there are too many trivial circumstances bordering upon the burlesque, and others altogether too atrocious. How to inspire a great interest in the minds of people of taste for a girl in man's dress, who begins by leaving a tap-room and ends by being burnt alive? Boileau himself could not have succeeded in it. My belief is that, under more than one aspect, this subject, drawn from our own annals, would lend itself better to jocular than heroic treatment."

RICHELIEU. — "I think so too, and no one would be more capable than you of doing it well, if you would undertake it. You ought to give us something upon it."[1]

The guests applauding, as guests usually applaud a duke's suggestions at his own table, the poet mentioned various objections. They pressed the subject upon him, and he at last promised to take it into consideration. He had been reading Italian a good deal during late years; and now, casting aside his serious work, he dashed into a poem upon the "Pucelle" in the manner of Ariosto, and in a few weeks he had four cantos done. The company reassembled at the Hôtel de Richelieu, to whom these four cantos were read, eliciting boisterous applause.

From this time the author worked occasionally upon the poem, relieving thereby the severity of other labors, until he had produced the work in twenty-one cantos as we have it now. He boasted that his burlesque was not as long as that of Ariosto. "I should have been ashamed," he once wrote, "to have employed thirty cantos in those fooleries and debaucheries of the imagination. These amusements are the interludes to my occupations. I find that one has time for everything if one wishes to employ it."

This mock-heroic poem of nearly ten thousand lines, the longest of his poetical works, is strictly in the line of Voltaire's accepted vocation, which was to terminate the domination of legends over the human mind. Unfortunately, it was not in his power at that time to know how much truth there

[1] Mémoires sur Voltaire, par S. G. Longchamp, Article XIV.

was in the legend of the patriotic and devoted girl who bled for her country and began the expulsion of the invader from French soil. Among the manuscripts in the royal archives, not then accessible, was the report of the trial of Jeanne Darc, which was published some years ago in five octavo volumes by the Historical Society of France. From this valuable publication, one of the most interesting memorials of that age, we are now able to understand her and her work; and, though we cannot deny that there was an ingredient of imposture in her career, and even conscious imposture, it becomes plain that the impulse which sent her forth and sustained her to the end was noble and disinterested. The Maid possessed some intelligence, great courage, and great fortitude. Unlike ordinary religious impostors, she bore her banner in the front of the battle, where wounds and death were in the air; she used religion in such a way as to change the French army from a crowd of roystering thieves, ravishers, and drunkards into moral, resolute, disciplined, victorious soldiers; and, at last, after baffling for five months the sixty priests who tried her, she courted the stake rather than endure degrading and hopeless imprisonment.

But Voltaire could have known scarcely anything of all this, and he employed the old legend of the Maid as a vehicle for twenty-one cantos of uproarious burlesque, in which he found opportunity, from time to time, to ridicule all the objects of his aversion, animate and inanimate, tossing in the same blanket saints, poets, critics, bishops, beliefs, rites, usages, human foibles, private enemies, public grievances, — all with the same buoyant, inexhaustible vivacity. Open the poem anywhere, and you alight upon something that would bring a grin to the cast-iron visage of a Calvin — if he was alone. It was written for a generation that had no more notion of what we mean by the word "decency" than the ladies had who told and heard the stories of the "Decameron." For twenty-five years one of the greatest proofs of devotion which one woman of "taste" could give another was to procure for her the perusal of a new canto of "La Pucelle." The Queen of Prussia not only read it, but permitted her young daughter to hear it read. The author's old professor, Abbé d'Olivet, bantered him upon it, as upon a jest, a little free perhaps, but quite

allowable. Ladies were particularly fond of such literature then, and I notice that when an author in that age wrote something for a lady's forfeit, he usually accommodated himself to the ruling taste of the sex by producing a tale like those in the "Decameron." Voltaire invariably did so. Our conception of decency, in short, is a thing of yesterday; not on that account the less to be approved and upheld; but not to be applied as a moral test to the literature of past ages.

Henceforth, then, we are to imagine a mass of blotted manuscript in the poet's desk, or carelessly left lying about on his table, liable to be copied by curious visitors and by unfaithful secretaries; a manuscript sure to be called for by guests "of taste," which the owner thereof was only too willing to read aloud for their entertainment; a manuscript of which vague rumors soon got afloat in the drawing-rooms, and reached the ears of ministers; a manuscript with exile and the Bastille in it, if not the wheel and the stake. In that immoral age, when living virgins were merchandise which the king himself bought, a light song about the Virgin could bring a man to the fire.

His English Letters were ready for publication. What trouble it cost him to get that little book before the public of France! In the autumn of 1730 he sent Thieriot to England with letters to his old friends in that country, to arrange for its translation into English and its publication in London. That was not difficult, and in due time Thieriot accomplished his errand, and gained, as it is said, four hundred pounds sterling by it. In France, meanwhile, Voltaire strove to conciliate the powers in favor of the book, and endeavored to reduce the offense in it to the minimum. "I have been obliged," he wrote to a friend, "to change all that I had written upon M. Locke, because, after all, I wish to live in France, and it is not permitted to me to be as philosophic as an Englishman. At Paris I have to disguise what I could not say too strongly in London. This circumspection, unfortunate but necessary, obliges me to erase more than one passage, sufficiently amusing, upon the Quakers and Presbyterians. My heart bleeds for it; Thieriot will suffer by it; you will regret those places, and I also. I have read to Cardinal de Fleury two letters upon the Quakers, from which I had taken great pains to cut

out all that could alarm his devout and sage Eminence. He found the residue pleasant enough; but the poor man does not know what he lost."

His "History of Charles XII." was nearly ready for the press early in 1730, and, having submitted it to the appointed censor, he received a royal "privilege" to publish it in France. For once, as he fondly thought, he had produced a work in which no offense could be found, and which must be agreeable to the administration, since it paid abundant honor to King Stanislas, father of the Queen of France. Fortune, indeed, had favored this history from its conception by giving the author familiar access to a great number of individuals who had personal knowledge of the strange events to be related. Nearly every page of it was composed from information derived from eye-witnesses. He had lived familiarly with Baron de Goërtz, favorite minister of Charles XII., distinguished in history as the only man who ever suffered death for the pernicious error of inflating a country's currency. King Stanislas himself had given and continued to give him important aid. Maurice de Saxe, son of Augustus of Poland and an actor in the scenes delineated, he had met constantly in the society of Madame Lecouvreur. Bolingbroke, who was in power during part of Charles's wild career, threw light upon the diplomacy and politics of his subject. In England the Duchess of Marlborough imparted to him much which she remembered of her husband's dealings with the Swedish king. Curious details of the king's life in Turkey he derived from Fonseca, a Portuguese physician established then at Constantinople, and in practice among the viziers and pachas. A relation of Voltaire's, M. Bru, "first dragoman to the Porte," aided him also. Baron Fabrice, long the reader and secretary of the Swedish king, gave him anecdotes and details in great number. The work was made up of "interviews;" but those interviews were not presented in crude, enormous masses, but digested into a narrative, bright, clear, and serene, that could be read in two evenings. Voltaire told this wild and wondrous tale as Sallust tells the story of Jugurtha; and there is revealed to the observant reader the author's contempt for the hero, as well as his compassion for a human race so imperfectly developed as to *permit* a silly and ignorant young man to work

such causeless havoc among innocent populations. The book is a satire upon personal government of unequaled force, and the more effective from being so brief and so easily read.

Superstition, the chief stay of personal government in modern times, is so quietly satirized that the censor did not perceive the satire. The Muscovites, said the sly author, have scruples about drinking milk on fast days, but fathers, priests, wives, and maidens get drunk upon brandy on days of festival. "In that country, as elsewhere, there are disputes upon religion; the greatest quarrel being upon the question whether the laity ought to make the sign of the cross with two fingers or with three." The passage, too, upon the establishment of the printing-press in Russia was amusing: "The monk objected, and used the printing-press to prove the Czar Antichrist. Another monk, with an eye to preferment, refuted the book, and demonstrated that Peter was not Antichrist, because the number 666 was not in his name. The author of the libel was broken upon the wheel; the author of the refutation was made Bishop of Rezan."

Happy in his "privilege," Voltaire put the work to press in Paris, and in the autumn of 1730 had an edition of twenty-six hundred copies of the first volume ready for distribution. Suddenly, without cause assigned, by a mere fiat of authority, the privilege was withdrawn and the whole edition seized, except one copy which the author chanced to have in his own possession.

What could be the matter? Voltaire sought information from the Keeper of the Seals, and obtained it. A turn in the politics of Europe obliged the French ministry to avoid displeasing Augustus, King of Poland, who was not treated very tenderly in the work! "In *this* country," the author wrote to a friend, "it seems to me that Stanislas ought to be considered rather than Augustus, and I flatter myself that Stanislas' daughter, Marie, would not take in ill part the good things I have said of her father." The minister admitted that he saw no harm in the work, and the minister's son declared, soon after, in a moment of enthusiasm, that if Voltaire did not publish it, he would. But the minister was firm in his resolve not to permit the book to appear *cum privilegio*, alleging always the necessity the King of France was under to *ménager*

the actual King of Poland instead of his father-in-law, the late king.

Here was a dead lock, — two works ready to appear, with little chance of their appearing; both being productions which, for various reasons, an author would naturally be in a fever to see in print. The foaming rage of desire which makes the buffalo toss the sods of the prairie in the summer day, regardless of the shrieking train, is not stronger than an author's passion to communicate to the public a book in which he has put his convictions, his patriotism, and his ambition. Privilege or no privilege, these two little books must see the light! Such was the resolve of their author in the late weeks of 1730. He recalled the time when Thieriot and himself had had "La Henriade" printed at Rouen, and had smuggled copies to Paris by barge and wagon. He wrote to his old friend and schoolfellow, M. de Cideville, now settled in the magistracy at Rouen, explaining his dilemma, and asking him if he could find there a place where he could live for some months in strict incognito, and a printer who could do the work required. Yes, replied his friend, Jore, printer and bookseller of Rouen, will be glad to provide lodgings for an anonymous author, and print for him as well.

Two things detained him at Paris a few weeks. He had an interest in a vessel named The Brutus, coming from Barbary to Marseilles laden with grain; and his tragedy of "Brutus," revised and altered, was again in rehearsal, and announced for presentation December 11, 1730. An immense audience filled the theatre on the opening night, and the piece was received with that kind of applause which denotes a house packed with friends of the author. But the next night's receipts revealed the truth. First night, 5065 francs; second night, 2540 francs; fifteenth and last night, 660 francs. The fable of a father dooming his sons to death may be endured in the reading, but we cannot *see* him do it, either with pleasure or approval; and it had been found impossible by dramatists, hitherto, to fill up five acts with interesting pretexts for such atrocious virtue. Voltaire expresses surprise that Shakespeare did not treat a subject that seemed so suitable to the English stage, and lay so obviously in Shakespeare's path. That such a master deliberately forbore to attempt it might well have

been a warning to after-comers. Voltaire's piece, however, contains three scenes of commanding effect, as well as a great number of striking verses, and when the play used to be given during the delirium of the Revolution, in 1792, it excited tumultuous enthusiasm.

On his way home from one of the representations of this play, the author learned that the ship Brutus, reported lost, had arrived safely at her port. "Well," said the poet to his factor, "since the Brutus of Barbary has come in, let us console ourselves a little for the sorry welcome given to the Brutus of ancient Rome. Perhaps a time will come when they will do us justice." [1]

The part of Tullie in the new tragedy was performed by a girl of fifteen, who appeared on the stage for the first time. She was terribly frightened on the opening night, and could not play the part as she had played it during the rehearsals. The next morning the author reassured her by a letter which was all tact and goodness.

"Prodigy [he wrote], I present you a 'Henriade,' a very serious work for your age; but she who plays Tullie is capable of reading; and it is quite right that I should offer my works to one who embellishes them. I thought to die last night, and am in a wretched state this morning; but for which I should be at your feet to thank you for the honor you are doing me. The piece is unworthy of you; but, rely upon it, you are going to win great glory in investing my rôle of Tullie with your own charms. . . . . Do not be discouraged. Think how marvelously well you played at the rehearsals, and that nothing was wanting to you yesterday but confidence. Your timidity even did you honor. To-morrow you must take your revenge. . . . . In God's name, be tranquil! Though you should not make a decided hit, what does it matter? You are but fifteen, and people could only say that you are not yet what you will be one day. For my part, I have nothing but thanks for you. . . . . Begin by having some friendly regard for me, who love you like a father, and you will play my rôle in an interesting manner."

He was too sick to go to the theatre on the second night, but toward the close of the evening his valet brought him the good news that Tullie had "played like an angel!"

In distributing the new edition of "La Henriade," he

† Duvernet, chapter vii.

sent a copy also to his ancient master, Father Porée, of the Collège Louis-le-Grand, asking him to receive it with some indulgence, and to think of him as a son who came, after the lapse of many years, to present to his father the fruit of his labors in an art which that father had originally taught him. He asked him also to point out any places in the poem where he had not spoken of religion as he ought, that he might correct them in the next edition. "I desire your esteem, not only as author, but also as a Christian."

About the middle of March, 1731, giving out on all sides that he was about to return to England, he disappeared from Paris, and took up his abode in obscure lodgings at the ancient city of Rouen, in the character of an English lord exiled for political offenses and obliged to live in strict seclusion. A valet, hired for the occasion at twenty sous per diem, added to the usual duties of a valet that of conveying proof-sheets between author and printer; M. Jore, also, was ever attentive to the pleasure of milord. In the summer, he removed to a farm-house near by, and then a servant-girl was his messenger, going to the printing-house three times a week. In the intervals of proof-reading, he worked, with even more than his usual assiduity, upon his tragedy of "Julius Cæsar," upon "Eriphyle," a tragedy sketched before leaving Paris, and upon the closing part of "Charles XII." He could write in June to Thieriot that, in spite of a slow fever that kept him miserable for some weeks, he had written two tragedies and finished "Charles XII." in three months. "In Paris, I could not have done that in three years. But you know well what a prodigious difference there is between a mind in the calm of solitude and one dissipated in the world." After a residence in and near Rouen of six months or more, he returned to Paris, without having yet seen a copy of his history. Great bundles of copies, however, soon arrived. We find him writing to a Rouen friend in October: "If it will cost only sixty livres by land, send the packages by the carrier to the address of the Duke of Richelieu, at Versailles, and I, being informed of day and hour of arrival, will not fail to send a man in the Richelieu livery, who will deliver the whole safely. If the land carriage is too expensive, I pray you to forward them by

water to St. Cloud, whither I will send a wagon for them." These *ballots*, probably, contained copies for the queen and court.

"Charles XII." was received with heartiest welcome in all countries which contained an educated class. Translations and new editions followed one another quickly, until it reached the whole reading public of Europe and America. When a writer takes all the trouble and leaves the reader nothing but pleasure, it is usual for critics to surmise that the author invented romantic or convenient circumstances. This work, written during the lifetime of thousands of men who had taken part in the events described, was subjected to severe and repeated scrutiny. The author, sedulous to profit by this, incorporated new facts from time to time, and corrected errors, until it was, perhaps, as true a narrative as written language could present of a career involving so many extraordinary and distant scenes. It remains to this day the only work of the author which has universal and unimpeded currency, being used as a school-book in all countries where French is a part of polite education. At the time it gave him a perceptible increase of reputation, as well as a certain weight with the public which he had not before possessed. It widened his celebrity, since there are ten persons who can enjoy an easy, limpid narrative in prose, for one who finds pleasure in classic poetry.

The English Letters were not yet seen in France. The author was still modifying the audacities, and veiling the heresies, and cutting away the inadmissibles, ever hoping to render the work such as a not ungenial cardinal might tacitly allow to circulate. It surprises us that he could have indulged such an expectation; but we perceive from his familiar correspondence with comrades that he did so.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE CONVULSIONIST MIRACLES.

On the return of Voltaire to Paris, late in the summer of 1731, he found his fellow-citizens again agitated by the ancient Jansenist and Molinist controversy. From being the sport of theologians, it had now come to be the scoff of the polite world and the scourge of the people. At that time France may have contained a population of twenty millions, of whom, perhaps, two millions could read, and half a million may have had mental culture enough to follow with pleasure an easy narrative like Voltaire's "Charles XII." When Talleyrand visited Yale College, as late as 1794, he told the president that he thought eighteen millions of the French people could neither read nor write.

An ignorant people take instinctively to the severer modes of religion, as they do to the severer schools of law and physic. They like their medicine, whether for mind or body, exceedingly nauseous and painful. They love the terrors of the law. Jansenism, too, had the advantage, which Voltaire enjoyed, of being constantly denounced and prosecuted by the government, — the most effective mode of advertising then invented. Hence the "philosophers" and the Jansenists shared the sovereignty over the French mind between them: the philosophers swaying the few thousands who partook of the intellectual life of the age, and the Jansenists controlling many hundreds of thousands who sought welfare through religion. As late as 1731, Voltaire could still say, with an approach to truth, that all France was Jansenist, except the Jesuits, the bishops, and the court.

It may have been on the very day of his reappearance in Paris, in 1731, that he witnessed the solemn and elaborate burning (August 29th) of a small Jansenist book by the public executioner. The book was the "Life of Deacon Pâris," or,

as the Jansenists loved to style him, Saint Pâris; a name of renown at that day among millions of Frenchmen who lived and died in ignorance of the name of Voltaire. The college of cardinals and the chiefs of the inquisition united in denouncing this little book, in menacing with "the excommunication major" all who should even read it, and in condemning it to be publicly burned. In the open space, opposite the convent of Minerva, a very large platform was built, and in front of it, at a distance of thirty paces, a stake was set up, as though Deacon Pâris himself was to be burned. The cardinals ascended the platform, to the eldest of whom the clerk of their court presented the unhappy Book, with thin chains twisted about it and fastened with care. The cardinal in chief handed the book thus bound to the grand inquisitor, who gave it back to the clerk. That officer then handed it to the provost, who gave it to a bailiff, who passed it on to a watchman, who placed it in the hands of the executioner, who raised it high above his head, slowly and gravely turning round to the four points of the compass. He then took off the chains from the book, tore out the leaves, one at a time, dipped each leaf in boiling pitch, and, finally, the whole mass of leaves being placed at the stake, he set fire to it, and regaled the people with a fine blaze.[1]

Why this childish scene? And who was Deacon Pâris? The reader who would understand Voltaire and his time must know what that thing was which called itself "religion" in his day, and how it presented itself to his eyes. I will therefore briefly answer these questions, reminding the reader, once more, that of these two brothers Arouet, one looked upon the scenes about to be described with contemptuous pity, and the other with rapturous approval.

Francis Pâris, born 1690, son of an eminent and wealthy Paris lawyer, imbibed the notion in childhood from his Jansenist teachers that the great interest of man is to propitiate an almost implacable deity by self-inflicted torture. He abandoned the profession of the law, to which his father destined him, refused the rank and inheritance of eldest son, and accepted from his father's large estate only a small pension, one fourth of his legal right. His father's death setting him

[1] Histoire du Parlement de Paris, par Voltaire, chapter lxiv.

free from restraint, his first care was to disengage himself from all worldly affairs and ties. Part of his inheritance was a mass of silver plate, weighing two hundred pounds. This he sold, and divided the proceeds among the poor. He inherited also a quantity of linen and other household stuffs, which his mother, according to the provident custom of the age, had accumulated. The linen he gave to a number of poor priests for surplices, and the other fabrics he divided among the poor families of his parish. Some barrels of salt had come to him, salt being then a very expensive article; this he distributed among the poor. Having thus disposed of his superfluous effects, and having remained at home long enough to see his younger brother married and settled, he went forth to begin his long-desired life of entire consecration to propitiatory religion.

He retired to a village near Chartres, hired secluded apartments, and gave himself up to prayers, study, fasting, and self-torture. All day he remained alone in his room, studying Hebrew, reading theology, and praying. He wore a hair shirt next his skin, and fasted on all the appointed days most rigorously, not eating a morsel of food till sunset. On Sundays he performed, at the request of the parish priest, the duty of catechizing the children. In winter he would have no fire in his room, and when the cold was too severe to be borne he merely covered his feet with a hair cloth.

He often changed his place of abode, but never his habits, except that he constantly increased the severity of his self-inflicted torments. Being intrusted by his parish priest with the charge of the young candidates for the priesthood, he led them to practice such extreme self-denial that he was complained of to the archbishop, who was thus made acquainted with his character. Instead of his reproving his excessive and ill-directed zeal, the archbishop desired to reward it by bestowing upon him the dignity of deacon, and held out to him the promise of still further advancement. The zealot deemed himself unworthy of the honor, and long refused it. His scruples being at length overcome, he was ordained, and thus acquired the title by which he is now known. Other ecclesiastical honors, though they were often pressed upon him, he declined.

As he advanced in life his austerities still increased, and he resolved, at last, to retire wholly from the haunts of men. First he traveled on foot over France, seeking some monastery congenial to him. From this journey he ingeniously extracted all the misery it could be made to yield, pursuing his weary way through all kinds of weather, ill clad, half starved, and lodging in the stables of the poorest inns. But in all his wanderings he found no retreat that promised sufficient severity, and he returned to Paris to contrive one for himself. There he withdrew to a mean and secluded abode, and set about the work of torturing himself to death with renewed vigor.

It was his habit now to fast during the whole forty days of Lent as rigorously as he had been used to fast on single days, never eating until sunset, and then only bread and water, nor much of them. Toward the close of the forty days he really suffered as much as his heart could wish. He would sometimes fall into convulsions, and endured awful pangs and spasms, which he attributed to the efforts of the devil to shake his purpose. He slept upon a straw mattress, except in seasons of penitence, when he preferred the floor. He had in his little room a table, one chair, no fire-place, and he ate nothing but bread, water-cress, and other raw herbs, with the occasional luxury of a hard-boiled egg or a plate of thin soup sent in to him by his landlord, a poor lace-maker. To still further mortify himself, he bought a stocking-frame, and earned his livelihood by making stockings, concealing from his fellow-lodgers that he possessed an independent income. His landlord, for a considerable time, thought he was a poor stocking-weaver, and it was in compassion for his supposed poverty that he sent him in the soup.

Having exhausted, at length, all the usual modes of self-sacrifice, he hit upon a new one: *he resolved to deny himself the consolations of religion itself!* For two years he abstained from taking the communion, alleging that he was unworthy; and it was only at the express command of his ecclesiastical superiors that he again partook of it. Frustrated thus in this design of tormenting his soul, he aggravated the tortures of his body, saying that, as every part of his body within and without was sinful, it was necessary that every part of it

should suffer, and suffer severely. Now it was that he added to his shirt of coarsest hair a girdle of iron, and to that a breastplate of iron wire in the form of a heart, with points of wire on the side next his flesh; so that when, in his penitential frenzies, he beat his breast with his hands the blood flowed.

The poor misguided man persevered in this suicidal course till he brought himself to death's door. When he lay helpless upon his straw his friends gathered round him and strove to alleviate his condition. He steadfastly refused their offers, and turned a deaf ear to all remonstrance, blaming himself only for not having concealed his sufferings, and saying that if he recovered his health he must "serve God" more faithfully than he had done before. He died aged thirty-seven, and was buried in a cemetery of his native city. He died of self-mortification at about the age when many young men (Byron and Burns, for example) die of self-indulgence, — a meaner and madder kind of suicide than his.

It was not till after his death that the events occurred which have caused this poor man to be so long remembered. The more ignorant Jansenists of Paris, hearing of the manner of his life and death, regarded him as a saint, and looked upon his burial-place as holy ground.

I once asked a distinguished judge of New York what he had learned by sitting thirty years upon the bench. He answered promptly, "The difficulty of arriving at truth through human testimony."

A catalogue of the miracles wrought at the tomb of Deacon Pâris, in three volumes folio, was published by a respectable priest, each miracle being supported by sworn testimony, taken before notaries, and certified in proper form. This testimony, upon many of the cases, is of such a nature and is so abundant in quantity that it would command a verdict, as the learned judge himself would charge. To illustrate the fallibility of human evidence, I will give a few examples drawn from this ponderous work.

Deacon Pâris died on the 1st of May, 1727. A woman, aged sixty-two, had met and exchanged civilities with the holy man. For many years she had had a withered arm, which was so useless that she was accustomed to hang it in a sling, while

she exercised her vocation of silk-winder. Hearing of the death of the venerated deacon, she determined to attend his funeral, and to pray at his grave for the restoration of her arm. Entering the apartment where lay the emaciated body prepared for the tomb, she fell upon her knees, lifted the cloth which covered the feet, and kissed them, saying, "Blessed saint, pray the Lord to cure me, if it is his will that I remain upon earth. Your prayers will be heard; mine are not." When the body was placed upon the bier, she leaned forward, and rubbed her arm with the pall. Having seen the corpse deposited in the tomb, she returned to her house and resumed her usual employment. What was her astonishment to discover that she had no longer any need of her sling, and could use one arm with the same facility as the other. The withered member had regained its former roundness and vigor, and she could lift with it as much as ever she could; nor had she ever after any return of the malady. The narrative of her cure, which she made on oath before a notary, is full and particular.

The fame of this miracle being spread abroad, other afflicted persons resorted to the tomb to avail themselves of its mysterious virtues. A Spanish nobleman, member of the Royal Council of Spain, had sent his son to Paris to complete his education. This young man, by a succession of accidents, lost the use of one of his eyes, and finally the eye itself oozed away. The doctors having abandoned his case in despair, he repaired to the tomb of Deacon Pâris, and there prayed most fervently for the restoration of his eye. His cure, though not sudden, was complete. He placed upon his eye a small piece of the shirt in which the deacon had died, and instantly felt some relief. That evening, upon going to sleep, he again placed the relic over his eye. "In the silence and secrecy of the night," says our chronicler, "the cure began, and when the young man woke, at three in the morning, his eye was perfectly restored, for he could see through the window of his room the houses on the opposite side of the street!" He rose joyful from his bed, threw off his bandages, and hastened to the tomb to return thanks.

Not only is this miraculous cure supported by an abundance of sworn testimony, but I have before me a letter, writ-

ten by Charles Rollin, the celebrated historian, in which he expresses his entire belief in the miracle. Dr. Rollin says: "I saw the sad condition to which Don Alphonse was reduced by the loss of one eye and the malady of the other, and I was agreeably surprised to see *the sudden and perfect change* which occurred in it, when every one despaired of its cure. This testimony I render with joy to the singular grace which God has shown to a young man whom I loved the more tenderly because Providence himself seemed to have consigned him to my care."

Several volumes could be filled with similar narratives, some of which are more wonderful and incredible even than this. There was, for example, an old lady of sixty-nine, swollen to a monstrous size by dropsy, covered with ulcers, an object of horror to every beholder. There are one hundred pages of testimony, much of it given by surgeons of reputation, to the effect that this woman was instantly and completely cured by praying upon the tomb of Deacon Pâris. Many persons, born humpbacked and otherwise distorted, left the tomb walking erect, and with vivacity more than usual.

As the celebrity of the tomb increased, the concourse of the sick, the lame, the halt, the blind, and the dumb became such as to incommode the neighborhood. The whole cemetery and the neighboring streets were crowded with women and men of all ages, afflicted with all maladies. Here were seen men writhing upon the ground in epileptic fits; there were others in a kind of convulsive ecstasy, swallowing pebbles, earth, pieces of glass, and even burning coals! Yonder were women beside themselves, standing upon their heads, while other women, prostrate upon the earth, called upon the by-standers to relieve their agony by striking them heavy blows upon the body. Some women danced, others leaped into the air, others twisted their bodies in a thousand extravagant ways, others assumed postures designed to represent scenes of the Passion. Some of them sang; others groaned, grunted, barked, mewed, hissed, declaimed, prophesied. The dancing, conducted by a priest, was the favorite exercise, and many of the lame, it is said, who had not stood upon their feet for years, found themselves able to join in it with great activity.

Scenes of this nature were daily exhibited in the cemetery

for the space of five years. At the end of that period the extravagance had risen to such a height that both the church and the kingdom were scandalized by it. The king then interfered, and published an edict, which ordered the cemetery to be closed, and forbade assemblages of people in the neighborhood. The morning after this edict appeared, one of the wits of Paris wrote upon the gate of the cemetery the well-known epigram, "By order of the king: God is forbidden to perform miracles in this place."

But the madness continued. The earth of the cemetery and the water of a well near by were conveyed to private apartments, and there the miracles were renewed. In all the history of human folly there is nothing so extravagant as the scenes which now occurred. It became the mode for the sick to fall into the most violent convulsions, during which they were subjected to treatment still more violent. One or two examples out of a thousand will suffice. A young girl of seventeen, afflicted with a chronic disease, was laid upon the floor. Twenty-three grown persons placed one of their feet upon her body, and pressed with all their force upon it, — an operation which, as she said, gave her the most exquisite delight, and effected a total cure. Other women, stretched upon the floor in convulsions, were beaten with an oaken club on every part of the body, and with all the force of a strong man, to their great joy and lasting relief. A witness swears that he saw one poor woman receive, without harm, two thousand blows, any one of which would have felled an ox. Other witnesses testify that five strong men endeavored to thrust a sword into the body of one of the convulsed, but could not. Sometimes swords were thrust into the body, but the wound immediately healed without leaving a scar. One woman received, in one night, thirty thousand blows of the fist from relays of strong men; another was beaten for fifty-five minutes with a huge oaken club, at the rate of thirty blows a minute, without incurring the slightest harm. All of which is supported by a superabundance of sworn, positive, and detailed testimony from persons of repute.

The climax of this impious and wonderful folly was reached when they began to parody the crucifixion. The following account of one of these scenes rests upon an amount of evidence

which would convict a man of murder before any of our courts. If the jury believed one half of the witnesses, they would be compelled to convict. A woman called Sister Frances, aged fifty-five, who had been subject to convulsions for twenty-seven years, was crucified three times. On the last occasion, the ceremony began at seven o'clock in the morning by stretching her upon a cross in the ordinary form, laid upon the floor. A priest drove a nail through the palm of her left hand into the wood of the cross, and then let her alone for two minutes. Then, pouring a little water upon the right hand, he nailed that to the cross. The woman, who was in a convulsion, appeared to suffer severely, though she neither sighed nor groaned; her flushed face alone indicating anguish. Thus she remained for twenty-eight minutes (these chroniclers are very exact), at the end of which time they nailed her two feet to a shelf upon the cross. The nails, we are informed, were square in shape, and six inches long. No blood flowed from any of these wounds, except a very little from one of her feet.

Having thus completed the nailing, they let her remain fifteen minutes longer, and then gradually raised one end of the cross, supporting it first upon a chair, and finally leaning it against the wall. Here it was allowed to remain for half an hour, during which they read a chapter from the Gospel of St. John, which the woman appeared to understand and enjoy. Next they placed upon her head a crown of sharp iron wires, to represent the crown of thorns. She was nailed to the cross for three hours, and then the nails were gradually drawn out, which appeared to cause much suffering. "One of the nails," says the narrator, "*I put in my pocket, and I have it now.*" The hands of the woman bled profusely, but when they had been washed with a little water, she rose, warmly embraced one of her friends, and appeared to have undergone little injury. The wounds were rubbed with a small cross, which had been sanctified at the tomb of Deacon Pâris, and they immediately closed. This story is related at such length, and is supported by such a number of affidavits, that it occupies nearly one hundred folio pages.[1]

Both the brothers Arouet, I repeat, witnessed these events.

[1] Histoire des Miraculés et des Convulsionaires de Saint-Médard, par P. F. Mathieu. Paris, 1864.

The impression they made upon the mind of Voltaire is revealed to us in several of his works. He burlesques them in "La Pucelle;" he gravely describes them in his histories; he alludes to them in his letters; and in all he regards them with as much respect as we do the hideous and fantastic tricks by which the Indian and the African medicine men impose upon the credulity of their tribes. Armand, on the contrary, beheld them with abject faith. He compiled a collection of the miracles, which his brother inherited and kept all his life, and which is said still to exist at Petersburg, with the rest of the Voltaire manuscripts bought by Catherine II. He delighted to attest the miracles both as notary and as man. Among the great number of affidavits appended to the case of Madeleine Durand, a young girl miraculously cured of a "frightful cancer in the mouth," is one by Armand Arouet. This dreadful cancer, we are assured by the historian of the miracles, Carré de Montgeron, only began in the mouth, and gradually infected all the blood, wasted the body to a skeleton, distorted the face out of all knowledge, and corrupted the air to a distance of ten paces. Armand Arouet swore to the effect following: —

"I have seen her often fall in convulsions; and then she seemed to be quite out of her senses, conscious of nothing that passed in her presence. Possessed by various sentiments that sprung up in her mind, she gave expression to them in short and most fervent prayers. In those same convulsions I have seen her throw herself down, and strike the floor again and again with her cancer very hard, and rub it against the tiles with all her might. Sometimes she begged one of the persons present to put his hands upon her left cheek and lean upon it with all his weight, the cancer being in contact with the floor. I have seen her cut off a piece of her cancer with a pair of scissors. Her blood then flowed abundantly, but as soon as she poured some water from the well near the tomb of M. Pâris upon the wound, at that very instant the blood was stanched. I saw that but once, but I know that a great number of persons will render the same testimony, who have also seen it. Having learned that the most skillful surgeons of Orleans, where this convulsionist was born, had pronounced her malady incurable, and as their opinion was confirmed by that of the most celebrated surgeons of Paris, I ceased to visit her assiduously, and awaited the event. At the beginning of 1735 I saw her perfectly cured, and have seen her several times since; to-day, also (this June 8, 1736), she

has been presented to me. The convulsions following immediately upon the invocation of the Blessed One [*le Bienheureux*, meaning Pâris], as I have myself witnessed; her cancer having disappeared totally, without leaving upon her cheek, inside or outside, any mark of iron or fire; the perfect health which she now enjoys, — all convinces me that we can assign a cure so miraculous to no other agent than God."

Thus Armand Arouet, brother of Voltaire!

The brothers probably conversed together upon the convulsionist miracles; and perhaps Voltaire had Armand in his mind when he wrote, many years after, in the "Philosophical Dictionary," article "Fanaticism:" "When once fanaticism has gangrened a brain, the malady is almost incurable. I have seen convulsionists who, in speaking of the miracles of Saint Pâris, grew warm by degrees; their eyes flashed fire; their whole body trembled; their fury distorted their countenances; and they would have killed any one who had contradicted them. Yes; I have seen those convulsionists. I have seen them twist their limbs and foam at the mouth. They cried, 'We must have blood!'"

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE TENDER "ZAÏRE."

It was from a mansion near the Palais-Royal that Voltaire surveyed life at this period. Not his own mansion, of course. Since his return from England, in March, 1729, until near the close of 1731, he had had no fixed abode ; but soon after coming from his hiding-place near Rouen he found luxurious quarters in the hotel of the Countess de Fontaine-Martel, a merry old widow, with a well appointed house, forty thousand francs a year, and the easy morals of a Ninon de Lenclos. Being at this time "past love, through age and erysipelas," she gave a nightly supper to the amusing people of the day, among whom, if we may judge of the specimens of her talk reported by Voltaire, she surpassed Ninon herself in the license which she allowed her tongue. It would be hard to decide which were farther from the right way, — this witty and audacious old countess, or the serious women who groveled at the tomb of Deacon Pâris.

From being a frequent guest at her suppers, Voltaire at length yielded to her desire that he should occupy rooms in her house ; and there, during the brief remainder of her life, he lived and reigned, as though he had been the natural lord of the mansion. As he himself remarked, it was precisely as if he had been the master of a magnificent hotel and forty thousand francs a year. He presided at her suppers ; he conducted her private theatricals ; he tried his plays upon her stage ; he enjoyed her box at the opera; he used her coach; he rode upon her horses, — and paid for all by an epistle or two in verse, which fill two or three pages of a volume, and preserve her name. A lucky old reprobate she was to have such an inmate. From one of these epistles posterity learns that "Martel" was the exact opposite of a saint of the kind then in vogue; since she preferred long, merry, and tranquil suppers

to pious vigils, and chose Voltaire for the director of her conscience instead of a Jansenist priest. "In her abode reigned LIBERTY, decent, tolerant, and serene, conjointly with her sister GAYETY, never bitter in her satire, neither prudish nor dissolute."

The epistle does not quite accord with prosaic accounts of the lady's character or manners. In a letter written in 1767, Voltaire himself gives a taste of her: "No more tragedies from me. . . . . I console myself in forming young people. Madame de Fontaine-Martel used to say that when one had the misfortune to be no longer . . . . it was necessary to be procuress." The lady, however, used the simpler language of the tap-room.

In her hotel was first performed his new tragedy of "Ériphile," where it received the applause bestowed upon drawing-room theatricals. Fourteen years had now elapsed since the production of "Œdipe," and never since had the author tasted the sweet delirium of an unequivocal dramatic triumph. Total failures had alternated with successes of esteem, which tantalize, not satisfy; and the growing popularity of "Charles XII." seems but to have provoked his desire to prove himself equal to works more difficult. Unfriendly critics, too, began to taunt and disparage; the modern reviewer was developing; literary periodicals were acquiring vogue and power; and this author began now to experience the bondage of a great and dazzling celebrity. What could be esteemed literary glory in Paris compared with dramatic success? A truly excellent acting-play will perhaps forever remain the supreme product of human genius, as it is also the one which gives the greatest rapture to the greatest number. In France, a genuine dramatic success was then very much what it now is; and our susceptible poet evidently felt that his other glories only made this supreme glory the more necessary to him. His letters show how ardently he strove to perfect his "Ériphile, Queen of Argos;" correcting, changing, rewriting, reading it to friends, and, finally, trying it upon a private stage. The play slightly resembles "Hamlet" in its plot, and he ventured to introduce the ghost of a murdered king upon the stage, who appears in a temple, and there calls solemnly upon his son to avenge his death. The queen,

too, was a party consenting to the murder, and in a few other particulars we are reminded of "Hamlet." Voltaire had high hopes of his ghost, remembering, doubtless, the thrill and awful hush which the appearance of Hamlet's ghost never failed to cause in London, even when not well played. He dared not attempt a long scene of the kind, but showed his ghost only for a few moments, in the fourth act, just as the guilty pair were about to enter the temple to be married. The temple opens; the ghost is revealed in a menacing posture. The guilty mother, her paramour, and the innocent son stand appalled.

GHOST. — "Hold, wretch!"

QUEEN. — "My husband's self! Where am I?"

SON. — "Dread spirit, what god causes thee to leave the infernal shades? What is the blood that flows from thee? And what art thou?"

GHOST. — "Thy king! If thou aspirest to reign, stop, obey me."

SON. — "I will. My arm is ready. What must I do?"

GHOST. — "Avenge me upon my tomb."

SON. — "Upon whom?"

GHOST. — "Upon thy mother."

SON. — "My mother? What dost thou say? O uncertain oracle! But hell withdraws him from my distracted gaze. The gods shut their temple."

The edifice then closes, and the ghost is no more seen.

"Ériphile" was not successful. The poor ghost had to be exhibited upon a stage half filled with Paris dandies, and could not succeed in appalling either them or the more distant spectators. The piece was not absolutely damned, but it did not interest, and it was soon withdrawn. The author rewrote three acts, and prefixed a very taking prologue. The prologue was a hit, but the play still going heavily he withdrew it from the theatre and, finally, even from the printer; and, years after, as his manner was, used some of the material and some of the verses in his tragedy of "Sémiramis."

Friends interposed their advice on this occasion. The baffled author in old age used to speak of a certain supper at Madame de Tencin's, where Fontenelle and other persons of note in literature joined in friendly remonstrance against his persisting further in a career for which he was evidently not

made. One success, two failures, two escapes! Thus the account stood so far; and who could say how much of the brilliant success of "Œdipe" was due to Sophocles, how much to accident, how much to Voltaire? La Harpe once asked him what reply he made to the remarks of his friends at Madame de Tencin's. "None," said he; "but I brought out 'Zaïre.'"[1]

"Zaïre" was a new and captivating subject, suggested perhaps by Shakespeare's "Othello," as "Ériphile" seems a faint reminiscence of "Hamlet." He dashed at it with amazing impetuosity, as if inspired by failure. During his late residence at Rouen he had renewed his school-boy intimacy with Cideville and Formont, who retained in maturity the love of literature which they had imbibed at the Collège Louis-le-Grand. He made them now his literary confidants, and they in return gave him plenty of advice, and sometimes came from Rouen to Paris to witness the performance of his plays. He wrote tumultuous letters to these sympathizing friends this summer; sometimes to one, sometimes to both at once. It is in such letters as these that we see both the mode and the motive of his labors. Here is the history of the new tragedy in a few sentences from them:—

[To Cideville, May 29th.] "I have corrected in 'Ériphile' all the faults which we remarked. Scarcely was this task finished, when, in order to be able to review my work with less self-love, and to give myself time to forget it, I began another, and I have taken a firm resolution not to cast my eyes upon 'Ériphile' until the new tragedy is done. This play will be made for the heart, as much as 'Eriphile' was for the imagination. The scene is to be laid in a very singular place, and the action will pass between Turks and Christians. I shall depict their manners to the utmost of my ability, and I shall try to throw into the work all that the Christian religion has of most pathetic and most interesting, and all that love knows of most tender and cruel. Here is work for six months."

[To Formont, on the same day.] "Every one here reproaches me that I do not put more love into my pieces. There shall be love enough this time I swear to you, and not gallantry either. My desire is that there may be nothing so Turkish, so Christian, so amorous, so tender, so infuriate, as that which I am now putting into verse for the pleasure of the public. I have the honor already to have done an

[1] 9 Cours de Littérature, 139.

act of it. Either I am much deceived, or this will be the most peculiar piece we have upon our stage. The names of Montmorenci, of Saint Louis, of Saladin, of Jesus, of Mahomet, will be in it. There will be mention of the Seine and of Jordan, of Paris and of Jerusalem. We shall love, we shall baptize, we shall kill, and I will send you the outline as soon as it is done. . . . . Don't ask me for news of the parliament. I know, and wish to know, only *les belles-lettres.*"

[To Formont, June 25th.] "Hearty thanks, my dear friend, for the good advice you give me upon the plan of a tragedy; but it came too late. The tragedy was done. It cost me but twenty-two days. Never have I worked with such swiftness. The subject drew me on, and the piece made itself. . . . . At present I am having it copied; as soon as I have a copy ready, it shall start for Rouen, and go to Messieurs de Formont and Cideville. Scarcely had I written the last verse of my Turco-Christian piece than I took up 'Eriphile' again."

[To Cideville, June 27th.] "A man just finishing a new tragedy has not time to write long letters, my amiable Cideville; but every scene of the piece was a letter which I wrote to you, and I said to myself continually, 'Will my tender and susceptible friend Cideville approve this situation or this sentiment? Shall I make him shed tears?' At length, after having rapidly written my work, in order the sooner to send it to you, I read it to the actors."

[August 25th. To both.] "My dear and amiable critics, I wish that you could be witnesses of the success of 'Zaïre;' you would see that your advice was not useless, and that there was very little of it which I did not profit by. Permit me, my dear Cideville, to express to you freely the pleasure I enjoy in seeing the success of a work which you approved. My satisfaction augments in communicating it to you. Never piece was so well played as 'Zaïre' at the fourth representation. I wished you there; you would have seen that the public did not hate your friend. I appeared in a box, and the whole pit clapped me. I blushed, I hid myself; but I should be a hypocrite if I did not confess to you that I was sensibly touched. It is sweet not to be without honor in one's own country: I am sure you will love me the more for the avowal. But, messieurs, send me back 'Ériphile,' which I cannot do without, and which is going to be played at Fontainebleau. *Mon Dieu!* what a thing it is to choose an interesting subject! 'Ériphile' is far better written than 'Zaïre;' but all the ornaments, all the spirit and all the force of poetry are not worth (so people say) one touch of sentiment."

The new tragedy had indeed all the success which a play can have with the play-going public. On the first night,

August 13, 1732, the pit, it is true, was a little refractory at times: now tittering at a hasty verse; now half inclined to rebel against innovation; now almost laughing at an effect that missed fire. Colley Cibber records an anecdote of this stormy first night, related to him by an English barrister who was present. During the delivery of a soliloquy by Mademoiselle Gaussin, the Englishman was seized with such a violent fit of coughing as to compel the lady to pause for several seconds, which drew upon him the eyes of the whole audience. A French gentleman, sitting near, leaned over and asked him if Mademoiselle Gaussin had given him any particular offense, since he took so public an occasion to resent it. The cougher protested that he admired the actress too much to disoblige her in any way, and would rather leave the theatre than disturb her again.[1]

Audiences then, according to Cibber, were inclined to be despotic, and were most prompt to resent the slightest departure from usage, whether before or behind the foot-lights. He says that he saw a play at the Théâtre Français interrupted for several minutes by the audience crying *Place à la dame!* to a gentleman in the second tier, who was sitting in front of the box, so as to obscure the view of a lady behind him.

For a short time the fate of the tender "Zaïre" was in doubt before that turbulent and tyrannical tribunal, the *parterre*. But the pathos of the chief scenes subdued all hearts at length. The author on the following days removed the more obvious blemishes, and "Zaïre" took its place as a public favorite, which it retains to this day. After a first run of nine nights, the summer season closed; but, being resumed in the autumn, it had twenty-one representations, and continued to be reproduced from time to time. It was performed before the king and queen at Fontainebleau; it was translated into English, and given with applause in London; and, finally, being published "with privilege," was spread abroad over Europe. He dedicated the printed edition to his English friend, Falkener, thus: "To M. Falkener, English merchant; since ambassador at Constantinople." He added, as was his wont, a dedicatory epistle, in mingled prose and verse, in

[1] Cibber's Apology, London, 1740, page 482.

which he said various things that he wished his own countrymen to consider:—

"You are an Englishman, my dear friend, and I was born in France; but those who love the arts are all fellow-citizens. Honest people who think have very much the same principles, and compose but one republic. . . . . I offer, then, this tragedy to you as my countryman in literature and as my intimate friend. At the same time, I take pleasure in being able to say to my own nation in what estimation merchants are held among you; how much respect is felt for a profession which makes the greatness of the state, and with what superiority some of you represent their country in parliament. I know well that this profession is despised by our *petits-maîtres;* but you know also that our *petits-maîtres* and yours are the most ridiculous species that creep with pride upon the surface of the earth."

He extols again, above all things else, the happy liberty of thought enjoyed in England, which, he says, communicated itself to his own mind whenever he associated with Englishmen. "My ideas are bolder when I am with you."

This was truly the case, as was shown by the two plays, "Eriphile" and "Zaïre," both of which were written with a certain new audacity and spirit, derived, in part, from Shakespeare. Zaïre was a Christian captive in Jerusalem, reared in ignorance of her faith and country, and beloved by the Soudan, the Mahometan ruler of the region. She warmly returned his passion; and the play opens near the hour fixed for their union. But on that fatal day she discovers her origin, meets her aged father just released from long imprisonment, meets her brother coming to ransom Christian captives, and thus finds herself in the clutch of passions as irreconcilable as tigers in presence of one stray white lamb. On one side, religion, loyalty, natural affection, and pride of race; on the other, a deep and tender love at the hour of fruition, and a lover all fire and jealousy. The tender lamb, of course, is torn in pieces. The Soudan, mistaking the brother for a lover, and a baptismal rendezvous for a rendezvous of love, kills her; and then, discovering his error, kills himself.

Forget "Othello;" come to "Zaïre" by the road of the ancient classic drama of France, and you find it a powerful and affecting work, with many a passage of genuine force and

beauty; the whole performance announcing the deliverance of the French stage from the bondage of its ancient rules and unities. The subject was a happy one for an author born to exhibit the nothingness of those theological differences which made men willing to tear out one another's vitals. "On the banks of the Ganges," says the innocent, bewildered Zaïre, "I had been a devotee of false gods; in Paris, a Christian; here, a Mahometan. Instruction does all; the hand of our fathers engraves upon our feeble hearts those first characters which time and example retrace." And again, speaking of her lover: "Can God hate a heart so magnanimous? Generous, beneficent, just, full of excellent qualities, if he had been born a Christian, what would he have been more?" The Mahometan chief speaks, in his turn, of the wonder and indignation he had felt on finding himself equaled in virtue by a Christian!

Tragedy, comedy, farce, poem, history, romance, — whatever might be the name and plumage of the pigeon which Voltaire loosed in his author's life of sixty years, the message under its wings was sure to be such as these words convey.

But, in "Zaïre," he was fortunate, as an author competing for public favor, in having opportunities to give eloquent expression also to the feeling which inspired the crusades; and thus he gave pleasure in the same play, and sometimes in the same passage, to the philosophers and to the Christians. "Great by his valor, greater by his *faith*," is a sentiment which a French girls' boarding-school would, perhaps, still applaud. There is also a magnificent burst of religious feeling in the second act, where the aged father of Zaïre appeals to the sacred objects and places near Jerusalem, to rouse in his daughter the dormant Christian sentiment. "Thy God whom thou betrayest, thy God whom thou blasphemest, died for thee, died for the universe, amid *these* scenes. Turn thine eyes; his tomb is near this palace. Here is the Mount whereon, to wash away our sins, he was willing to die under the wounds of impious men. Yonder is the place where he returned to life from the grave. In this august region thou canst not take one step without finding thy God!"

The success of "Zaïre" gave its impetuous author no rest, no pause; for it was his habit not only to correct ceaselessly

his past works, but to have several new ones in progress at the same time. In the interval of the summer holidays we see him "reworking 'Zaïre' as though it had been a failure," recasting "Julius Cæsar" and "Ériphile," correcting "Charles XII." for a new Holland edition, replying at much length to a pamphlet calling in question some of its statements, adding important things to his English Letters, meditating a new play, accumulating material for his "History of Louis XIV.," and writing long letters, with sprightly and graceful verses interspersed. "How much toil and trouble," he writes to Formont in September, 1732, "for this smoke of vainglory! Nevertheless, what should we do without that chimera? It is as necessary to the soul as food is to the body. I have made 'Ériphile' and 'Cæsar' all over again; and all for that smoke."

In October he was at Fontainebleau, where he spent six weeks, superintending the performance before the court of old plays and new, — "Zaïre" and "Mariamne" among them, — and in rewriting his chapter upon Newton and Gravitation for the English Letters, getting important aid from his friend and mathematician, Maupertuis. In the midst of his court life we discover him corresponding with Maupertuis upon the Newtonian philosophy; which was so little known in France, and so lightly regarded, that he began to doubt whether it could be all that the English claimed for it. "A frightful scruple comes to me," he writes, "and all my faith is shaken." But Maupertuis completely reassured him. "Burn my ridiculous objections," Voltaire rejoins; and he goes on with his Newtonian chapter without fear. Who that saw him about the palace at this time could have suspected such a correspondence! "The whole court," he writes to a young lady, while he was puzzling over Newton, "has been in combustion for three or four days with regard to a bad comedy which I kept from being played. . . . . Two parties were formed: one, including the queen and her ladies; the other, the princesses and their adherents. The queen was victorious, and I made peace with the princesses. This important affair cost me but a few trifling, mediocre verses, which, however, were deemed very good by those to whom they were addressed; for there is no goddess whose nose the odor of incense does not regale."

We have a glimpse of him during this residence at court from a satirical letter of Alexis Piron, who was also a courtier for the moment. Piron had not yet recovered from the delusion which comic writers, as well as comic actors, frequently cherish, that nature meant him for the tragic drama. One of his tragedies, entitled "Gustave," he had offered to the actors, and may have had it with him at Fontainebleau. He could not, in early life, contemplate Voltaire's tragic triumphs with unalloyed satisfaction. This too brief description of court scenes is in his good comedy vein: —

"I should be much bored at court [he writes to the Abbé Legendre], but for a window corner in the gallery, where, opera-glass in hand, I post myself for some hours; and God knows the pleasure I have in seeing the goers and comers. Ah, the masks! If you should see what an edifying aspect people of your garb have! what an important air the courtiers! how the rest are changed by fear and hope! and, especially, how false those airs, for the most part, are to discerning eyes! It is a marvel. I see nothing genuine here but the faces of the Swiss guards, the only philosophers of the court. With their halberds upon their shoulders, their big mustaches, and their tranquil air, one would say that they regarded all these hungry fortune-hunters as people who are running after what they, poor Swiss as they are, obtained long ago. Speaking of that, it was with a sufficiently Swiss expression that I watched, very much at my ease, yesterday, Voltaire, bustling about like a little green pea among the crowds of foolish people who amused me. When he saw me, —

"'Ah, good day, my dear Piron. What are you at court for? I have been here these three weeks. They played my "Mariamne" the other day, and they are going to play "Zaïre." When "Gustave"? How are you? Ah, Monsieur Duke, one word. I was looking for you.'

"He said that all in a breath; I was unable to get in a word. So, this morning, having met him again, I said at once, —

"'Very well, thank you, sir.'

"He did not know what I meant until I told him he had left me the evening before asking me how I was, and I had not been able to answer him sooner."

The sage Piron does not tell us how Voltaire extricated himself on this occasion. Late in the year the author of "Zaïre" returned to Paris, and spent the winter at the hotel of his aged countess, in that tumult of work and pleasure, of literature

and speculation, which made up his life at the capital Early in January, 1733, there was a memorable evening at Madame de Fontaine-Martel's, when "Zaïre" was performed in the *salon*, the author himself playing the part of Lusignan, the aged and dying father of the heroine. "I drew tears from beautiful eyes," he wrote to Formont. Almost every day there was a festival of some kind at this hotel, — a festival, too, the chief design of which was to amuse Voltaire. There were charades, games, forfeits, feats of rhyming, cards, music, comedy, tragedy, *divertissement*, — all the gayeties in vogue. High play, too, sometimes; for this thriving poet mentions losing there twelve thousand francs in one evening.

Suddenly, in January, 1733, the gay, distracting life came to an end. Death knocked at the door. The aged countess fell dangerously sick, suffered a few days, and died. Her death, it must be confessed, was not "edifying," and Voltaire's account of it not more so. "What o'clock is it?" asked the dying woman. Without waiting to be told, she added, "Blessed be God, whatever the hour may be, there is somewhere a rendezvous!" [1]

He gave other particulars, not less astounding, in a letter to Formont, just after the funeral: —

"I owe an answer to your charming epistle [in prose and verse], but the illness of our baroness suspended all our double rhymes. I did not believe, eight days ago, that the first verses I should have to compose for her would be her epitaph. I cannot conceive how I bore all the burdens that have overwhelmed me these fifteen days past. On the one hand, they seized an edition of 'Zaïre;' on the other, the baroness was dying. I had to go and solicit the Keeper of the Seals, and, at the same time, to seek the viatica. At night I was in attendance upon the patient, and all day I was occupied with the details of the house. Imagine it: it was I who announced to the poor woman that she had to set out [*partir*]. She was unwilling to hear the last ceremonies spoken of; but I was obliged in honor to make her die in the rules. I brought her a priest, half Jansenist, half politician, who made believe confess her, and afterwards gave her the rest. When this comedian of St. Eustache asked her aloud if she was not firmly persuaded that her God, her Creator, was in the Eucharist, she answered, *Ah, yes!* in a tone that would have made me burst out laughing, in circumstances less doleful."

[1] Voltaire to Richelieu, July 19, 1769.

And this countess had a daughter who was a Jansenist, and doubtless believed in the miracles of the blessed Pâris! Such was the dislocation of society then! Voltaire speaks of writing madame's epitaph. He did so, with perfect sincerity, in the first sentence of a letter to Cideville, written on the same day: "I have lost, as perhaps you know, Madame de Fontaine-Martel. That is to say, I have lost a good house of which I was the master, and forty thousand francs of revenue which was spent in diverting me."

It was necessary to dislodge, though he lingered three months longer in the "good house" of the departed. His next abode was a change of scene such as we see in a pantomime. From the airy and brilliant neighborhood of the Palais-Royal, he went to live, in May, 1733, at the house of his man of business, Demoulin, in a dingy and obscure lane, called then Rue de Longpont, now Rue Jacques-de-Brosse. Opposite the house was the fine portico of the church of St. Gervail, the bells of which, it appears, disturbed his repose. He told his friend Cideville that his new home was in the ugliest house of the ugliest quarter of Paris, and that he was more deafened in it by the noise of the bells than a sexton. "But," he added, "I shall make so much noise with my lyre that the sound of the bells will be nothing for me." Madame Demoulin served as housekeeper to all the inmates, and the merchant-poet was attended by a valet and an amanuensis.

He usually had with him a fledgeling poet or two, whose talents he encouraged,— with the usual result of total disappointment. The talents that move the world are apt to be discouraged, until they no longer need encouragement. Two poets, Lefèvre and Linant, were with him at this period. Lefèvre died in the flower of his days; but Linant, who possessed, as Voltaire remarks, all the virtues becoming a man of fortune, but not those that help a man to win fortune, clung to him long, and plagued him much by his unconquerable indolence. By the middle of May, 1733, Voltaire was settled in his new quarters, with his retainers, his *protégés*, and his projects, literary and commercial. "I come here," he wrote to Cideville, while he was moving, "to lead a philosophic life, the plan of which I have long had in my head, and never carried out."

He and his man of business were deeper than ever in commerce now, importing grain from Mediterranean ports, and bringing into France the rich products of Spain and Portugal. He was greatly interested, in 1733, in a project for making straw paper, an invention reserved for a later day. Many of his letters on this subject exist in manuscript, not yet accessible.[1] A more profitable enterprise than any of these was looming up this spring. The war to replace Stanislas upon the throne of Poland began this year, and Paris-Duverney returned with his brothers to their old trade of feeding the troops. He invited and advised Voltaire to take a share in the contract; and who could do the work better than one accustomed to import grain from the chief sources of supply? The contractors agreed to place provisions wherever needed at a fixed sum per ration (say, sixty sous); and hence, in an easy, languid, political war like this, an inordinate profit might be realized. In the course of two or three mild campaigns, Voltaire's share of the proceeds of the contract amounted to six hundred thousand francs;[2] and this without interrupting his career, and while he seemed wholly the man of letters.

It is not often that the same hand supplies an army with biscuit and with laurel. Among the minor poems of our contractor is one, in the poet-laureate style, celebrating the Italian campaign of 1734, for which campaign he assisted to furnish supplies. If the biscuit and the beef which he sent to the army of Italy were no better than the poem with which he regaled it, his soldiers would have given the contractor a sorry welcome if he had ventured into camp. Yet he put his own name to his sham poem, while using that of Demoulin for his honest business.

[1] Jeunesse de Voltaire, page 480.

[2] Mémoires, par S. G. Longchamp, article 34.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE ENGLISH LETTERS PUBLISHED.

But he could not live in Paris. He never could, long at a time. One would have thought that now his position was something more than merely secure in his native city; since, to a great and growing celebrity, he had taken the precaution to add a great and growing fortune.

He was forty years of age; fifteen years had passed since the production of "Œdipe," and he had a widening circle of "admirers," as well among the few who seek knowledge from the books they read as among the many who seek pleasure. The Marquise du Châtelet speaks of having known "La Henriade" by heart before she saw the author's face in 1733. In distant lands, men open to liberal ideas were reading his works with that silent gratitude with which we have hailed the succession of free spirits who have made our own generation memorable. We have been blessed with many such; but, in 1733 and later, Voltaire was the only conspicuous author on the Continent who wrote in the new spirit. Frederic, Prince Royal of Prussia, who came of age in 1733, was, we may be sure, not the only young man in Germany who scanned the horizon for the first sign of something new from Voltaire, and counted the days till he received his copy. In England he was, at least, a bookseller's favorite, for there was "money in him." Rival editions of "Charles XII.," a Henriade in English verse, two in French verse, three thousand copies of the English Letters printed for the first edition, a "Zaïre" in French for readers, a "Zaïre" in English on the stage, and all these running in 1732 and 1733, attest the commercial value of his reputation in England. Amsterdam had given Europe two editions of his collected works: one, a small duodecimo, in 1728; another, in two volumes octavo, in 1732.[1]

[1] Bibliographie Voltairienne, page 92.

But he could not live in Paris, notwithstanding.

There was a vacancy in the French Academy, in December, 1731, by the death of Lamotte, one of the Forty; that Academy which, as Voltaire himself tells us, was — as it now is — the darling object of desire to men of letters in France. The great Richelieu, who founded the Academy, would have given the vacant chair to the author of "Charles XII.," "Œdipe," "Zaïre," and "La Henriade." Voltaire may have been of that opinion, and appears to have had a momentary expectation of receiving the king's nomination. But, early in 1732, by some unknown chance or treachery was published that deistical poem, the "Epistle to Uranie," written by him ten years before for Madame de Rupelmonde, his traveling companion on the journey to Holland. It was published, too, with the name of the author. "What do you think of it?" asked the austere chancellor of France, D'Aguesseau, of his secretary, Langlois. "Monseigneur," replied the secretary, "Voltaire ought to be shut up in a place where he could have neither pen, ink, nor paper. That man, by the bent of his mind, can destroy a state."[1] The Archbishop of Paris complained formally to the lieutenant of police, Hérault, so often obliged to concern himself with a troublesome poet. The lieutenant summoned the culprit to his cabinet. Voltaire parried this grave danger by the expedient employed by Sir Walter Scott, whenever he was cornered touching the authorship of "Waverley." He plumply denied having written it. It was the work, he added, of the late Abbé de Chaulieu; he had heard the abbé recite it; and, indeed, in the volume of Chaulieu's works, collected by Thieriot, there are several poems expressing similar sentiments. The lieutenant, who may have seen "Zaïre" the evening before, was polite enough to pretend to believe this, and the poet retained his liberty. During Lent several orthodox poets tried their skill in replying to the obnoxious epistle in the "Mercure," but without eliciting response from the abbé.

The tender "Zaïre" was the innocent occasion of a more noisy and lasting, if less perilous commotion. J. B. Rousseau, still in unjust, dependent exile at sixty-three, had lost much of

[1] Paroles Mémorables, par G. Brottier, page 303. Quoted in Jeunesse de Voltaire, page 459.

his poetic power, without gaining in good temper. He heard of Voltaire's successes with the jealousy of a narrow mind soured by age and misfortune. He had written of Voltaire, in 1731, in a letter designed to be handed about Paris, in a style of affected contempt, as "a young man who imposed upon others by his effrontery, but produced nothing that posterity would take as true metal,"—a too obvious reminiscence of Voltaire's jest upon Rousseau's "Ode to Posterity." He spoke contemptuously of his plays as a string of fragments devoid of connection and of sense, improbable and unnatural, with here and there a few verses not wanting in spirit, but very irregular and inharmonious. "Add to that," wrote Rousseau, "a proud ignorance which disdains to be informed, a vanity that revolts, and an audacity in setting up rules intolerable in an author who neither recognizes nor knows any rule." All of which was ill-natured and unjust; but there was no savor of the Bastille in it, and no scent of the fagot. "Zaïre" was produced, and gave Voltaire rank as the tragic poet of the time. Rousseau received from his correspondent in Paris a copy of the tragedy, and with it some rumor of a composition by Voltaire called the "Temple du Goût,"—a piece of fun then in manuscript, in which Rousseau, among other poets, was burlesqued. The exile wrote in reply a long letter, which also was meant to circulate where it could do most harm:—

"The piece [Zaïre] which you sent me has arrived at last. Those who told me, four months ago, that the subtle design of the work was to prove Saracens better people than Christians gave me an erroneous idea of it; for it does not appear that the author had that design in view. The sentiment which reigns in it tends simply to show that all the efforts of Grace have no power over the passions. This impious dogma, not less hostile to good sense than to religion, is the sole basis of his plot. . . . . He must have a bad opinion of his auditory to suppose that the picture of frenzied concupiscence in a *Christian* piece, wherein a crucified God is spoken of, and the ineffable mysteries of the faith, would appear more touching than the miraculous effects of divine mercy."

He continues to denounce the play at inordinate length, styling it "an odious *mélange* of piety and libertinage," a "monstrous tragedy," "trivial and flat," which would revolt

all honest readers. He contrasts with "Zaïre" the pious tragedies of Racine and Corneille, so much admired at boarding-school exhibitions and convent festivals. He concludes his letter thus: —

"As to what you tell me of Voltaire's recriminations, I foresaw that your complaisance in permitting a copy to be taken of what I wrote to you upon this little author would call out something of the kind from him. But it gives me very little concern. He is a man of no consequence, who can build all the *Temples* he pleases without fear of my taking the hammer to work at their demolition. I esteem his architecture no more than I do his poetry. Nevertheless, although I have no desire to measure myself with such an adversary, I am not sorry that the public is informed of the reasons for his attacking me; and to that end the extracts can serve which you allowed to be taken of what I wrote to you on this subject."

Voltaire was transported with fury by this unprovoked and perilous attack. A man of his constitution, worn always by intense mental toil, and regulating his system more by medicine than by regimen, may become irritable to an inconceivable degree. But there were two peculiarities in his case: he could retain his anger a long time; and, the moment he took pen in hand, he could perfectly control it. Poor Rousseau exhibited his malevolence in every line; but Voltaire never seems more light of heart, more at peace with all the world, more free from everything like rancor, than in this "Temple of Taste," written chiefly, perhaps, to "get even with" J. B. Rousseau. No cat was ever more playful while a mouse was fluttering away its little life between her velvet paws. It was a piece of twenty-five or thirty printed pages, of verse and prose intermingled: chatty, critical, satirical, eulogistic, — everything by turns, and nothing long. It was such free and easy discourse upon men, things, and books, living and dead, ancient and recent, as might be supposed to fall from the poet's lips after supper, while surrounded only by friends. Fancy such talk printed in the life-time of three fourths of the people mentioned by name! Fancy it so spirited, so elegant, so witty, so brief, and, worst of all, so *true*, that all the reading world must possess it, must re-read it, must send it to their friends in the country, with fierce censure or chuckling eulogium! Sainte-Beuve truly remarks

that posterity has ratified its judgments; but there was the sting of it.

In a few verses of that graceful, complimentary, audacious badinage of which Voltaire is the sole master, he informs the reader that the Cardinal de Fleury had asked to go with him to the Temple of Taste. They set out together; and this piece is the record of their journey. Every folly of the hour is gayly and good-humoredly hit: "the cloud of commentators who restore passages, and compile big volumes apropos of a word they don't understand;" thoughtless expositors of thought; "connoisseurs of pictures who go into raptures at God the Father in his eternal glory, genteelly painted in the taste of Watteau;" the rage for Italian music; the excessive tasteless ornamentation of the new edifices; editors and reviewers who, "like insects, are only perceived when they sting;" old authors overrated and living authors misconceived. The cardinal and the poet, in the course of their journey, arrive near the entrance of the Temple, where, of course, they meet a throng of candidates for admission; among others, the austere and orthodox Rousseau.

"Another versifier arrives, supported by two little satyrs, and crowned with laurels and with thistles. 'I come,' says he, 'to laugh and have a good time, and to go it like the devil; and I won't go home till morning!' 'Why, what 's this I hear?' asks *la Critique*. 'It is I,' said the rhymer. 'I come from Germany to see you. I have taken the spring-time for it, since the young Zephyrs with their warm breath have *melted the bark of the waters*' [parody of a Rousseau couplet]. The more he spoke this language, the less the door opened. 'What do they take me for, then?' said he. 'For a frog that goes about singing, from the bottom of his little throat, Brekeke, kake, koax, koax, koax?' 'Ah, *bon Dieu!* what horrible jargon!' cried *la Critique*. She could not at first recognize him who expressed himself in this manner. She was informed that it was Rousseau, whose voice the Muses had changed to that of a frog, as a punishment for his spiteful tricks. She opened the door, however, in consideration of his early verses, saying, 'Poets, compose your verses at Paris, and don't go to Germany.' Then, approaching me, she said in a low tone, 'You know him; he was your enemy; and you do him justice. You see his Muse, between the altar and the fagot, handle indifferently the harp of David and the flageolet of Marot. Don't imitate his weakness in rhyming too long. The fruits

of the Permessus are produced only in the spring. Cold and melancholy old age is only made for good sense.'"

Admitted to the Temple, Rousseau turns pale with wrath at meeting there Fontenelle, against whom he had launched so many epigrams. He goes aside to make another epigram, while the aged and beloved Fontenelle "looks upon him with that philosophic compassion which a broad and enlightened spirit cannot help feeling for a man who only knows how to rhyme; and he goes away tranquilly to take his place between Lucretius and Leibnitz."

Among other applicants for admission to the Temple is a black monk, who announces himself thus: "I am the Reverend Father Albertus Garassus. I preach better than Bourdaloue [court preacher to Louis XIV.], for Bourdaloue never caused any books to be burned; whereas I declaimed with such eloquence against Pierre Bayle, in a little province overflowing with intellect, I so touched my hearers, that six of them burned their Bayles. Never before did eloquence obtain so beautiful a triumph." To whom *la Critique* replies, "Begone, Brother Garassus! Begone, barbarian! Out of the Temple of Taste! Out of my sight, modern Visigoth, who hast traduced the man of myself inspired!"

The "Temple du Goût" being ready for publication, the author read it to the Keeper of the Seals, who thought it might receive, not merely a tacit permission, but even a royal privilege, since he found nothing in it hostile to the state, to religion, or to morals. But while it was in the hands of the appointed censor, M. Crébillon, lo, it appeared from the press! Such accidents could happen at a time when it was so usual to take copies of poems circulating in drawing-rooms. Once in print, it ran like a prairie fire, and raised a buzzing and stinging storm about the author's ears of unexampled fury. On this occasion he was probably astonished to discover what a terrible weapon he wielded when he used his pen in his bantering manner, of which no translation can give an adequate idea. He had the art of cutting several ways at once, making sentences that had in them various currents of allusion, all exasperating to the victims, all diverting to the reader. It was like fighting with one of those hundred-bladed knives that boys admire in the shop-windows. At a moment when he had just

finished a new tragedy, "Adelaide," and was full of zeal in collecting material for his *opus magnum*, his "Louis XIV.;" at a time when, as he wrote to Thieriot, he was "exhausting and killing himself in order to amuse his fool of a country," he was in the midst of enemies, persecutions, and misfortunes.

Those whom he had not praised enough and those whom he had not praised at all were equally envenomed against him. "Join to that the crime of having printed this bagatelle without a permit sealed with yellow wax, and the wrath of the ministry against such treason; add to that the outcries of the court and the threat of a *lettre de cachet*, and you will have only a faint idea of the pleasant situation I am in, and of the protection given here to the *belles-lettres*."

There was danger in the air. He knew the insecurity of his position, and that his only safety was in getting upon his side a certain public opinion, — a public pride, — which would make the government ashamed to molest an ornament of the country. Hence his rage at such letters as those of Rousseau, which gave countenance and courage to the natural enemies of the human mind, — those who appealed to the dungeon and the fire when their interpretation of the universe was called in question. He was one against a host; he could depend on no effective support except his own tact and talent.

Among his minor writings, published during the last year or two of his attempt to continue his career in Paris, were three pieces in prose which attest his forethought and skill in this unequal combat. One of these was a long letter to the editors of the "Nouvelliste du Parnasse," politely remonstrating with them upon their harshness in dealing with the authors noticed by them. He said that, for his own part, he never permitted himself the liberty of saying or writing plain Fontenelle or Chaulieu, but always M. de Fontenelle and M. l'Abbé de Chaulieu, and he had corrected several persons of the habit of using such indecent familiarity towards men who shed lustre upon France. He might say "the great Corneille," since that poet was one of the ancients; but he always said M. Racine and M. Boileau, as those great men had been almost his contemporaries. The purport of the piece was that, because a man had failed to write a perfect work, he had not thereby

forfeited his claim to decent civility, and that men who assumed to criticise others should set an example, not only of just thinking, but of good breeding also.

Another of these pieces was in the form of a letter to his secretary and nascent poet, Lefèvre, upon the "Inconveniences attached to Literature." He tells this young man what he might expect if he should ever be so unfortunate as to write a good book in France: first, a year of suspense and solicitation while the censor held the manuscript; next, to be torn to pieces by the gazettes, which sell in proportion as they are malignant and abusive. It would be worse if he wrote for the stage: the actors, justly indignant at the abasement to which the law condemns them, lavish upon an author all the contempt with which they are covered; and the piece being at last performed, one bad joke from the pit gives it its quietus. You succeed? Then you are burlesqued at the minor theatres, twenty pamphlets prove that you ought not to have succeeded, and the learned affect to despise you because you write in French. Trembling, you carry your work to a lady of the court: she gives it to her maid to make into curl-papers; and the laced lackey who wears the livery of luxury derides your coat, which is the livery of indigence. After forty years of toil, you intrigue a place in the Academy, and go to pronounce with broken voice an oration which will be forgotten the next day forever. "One regrets to see the device of immortality at the head of so many declamations, which announce nothing of eternal except the oblivion to which they are condemned." All this in the lightest manner, sown thick with those happy touches and allusions which make a piece readable.

The third of these defensive, propitiatory pieces was in the guise of a "Letter to a Chief Clerk," a personage to whom a minister might be supposed to consign a new book for examination, and who therefore had a certain power over literature. He asks this imaginary clerk to remember, when he is examining a work, that if there had been a literary inquisition at Rome we should not possess Horace or Juvenal, nor the philosophical works of Cicero; and if in England, not Milton, Dryden, Pope, or Locke. "Repress libels, repress obscene tales, but let honest thought be free; let not Bayle be contraband."

He called attention to the commercial aspects of the case: "The thoughts of men have become an important article of commerce; Dutch booksellers gain a million a year because Frenchmen have had intellect. The genius of Molière, Corneille, Racine, and the dramatists formed by them lure to Paris great numbers of people from remote provinces and states, who come to enjoy pleasures nobler than those of sense. Foreigners who hate France bow in grateful homage to French genius. A magistrate who presumes to think that, because he has bought a seat on the bench, it is beneath his dignity to see 'Cinna' performed shows much gravity and little taste." The Romans built prodigies of architecture in which to witness the combats of beasts, and Paris had not one passable theatre for the presentation of the masterpieces of the human mind. "What man in Paris is animated by a regard for the public welfare? We gamble, we sup, we slander, we make bad songs, and go to sleep in stupidity, only to begin again on the morrow our round of lightness and indifference. Try, monsieur, to rouse us from this barbarous lethargy, and, if you can, do something for letters, which do so much for France!"[1]

Thus he strove to make a party in France for the rights of the human mind. Shakespeare, during the dismalest period of Puritanism, found a public in London capable of drawing from him, and generously rewarding, the sublimest of his tragedies, the most exquisite of his comedies. But Shakespeare confined himself to his vocation, and did not write "Temples of Taste." As dramatist, Voltaire, too, could have lived at the capital of his country; but the drama, much as he loved it, was really, at times, little more than the price he was willing to pay for the opportunity to act directly upon the intellect of France. It was a custom with him, all his life, whenever the storm howled menacingly about him, to divert public attention and disarm prejudiced authority by producing a new play. Twice lately he had declared his firm resolve never to write another play: once in the preface to "Zaïre," and again in the "Temple du Goût." He laughed when the revised "Temple du Goût" was brought to him on the day of publication, for he was just beginning a new tragedy.

That ingenious composition proved to be more than the sen

[1] 62 Œuvres de Voltaire, 26 to 51.

sation of a week. "It is detested and read by all the world," wrote the author in 1733. It was burlesqued at the Marionnettes. Sick Punchinello applies to a doctor, who advises blows with a stick, to make the patient sweat. "I have already tried that remedy," says Punchinello, "and it did me no good." Another doctor advises purgation and *lavements*, our poet's well-known remedies; and so he finally reaches the Temple du Goût, where he is enthroned upon a *chaise percée*. This exhibition was stopped by the police. In July, 1733, a dramatic burlesque of the piece was given at one of the minor theatres, wherein Voltaire himself was personated, dressed as a Frenchman, but in an English fabric of large pattern. He was made to talk, as an indignant spectator records, "like a fool, a perfect ninny, full of himself, who pokes his nose into everything, devoid of taste and judgment, finding nothing good except his own works." The burlesque was vehemently applauded, and ran many nights. "For my part," says the spectator just quoted, "my heart is pierced; I cannot bear to see one of the brightest spirits of France treated so." [1]

The ministry, he adds, were besought to suppress this play also, but refused, "being not unwilling to mortify a too bold spirit, and to punish him for certain truths scattered here and there in his works." Jordan may refer here to the new edition of his "works" published in Holland, which excited in the author's own mind lively apprehensions. The editors, he remarked to Cideville, have taken care, whenever there were two readings of a passage, "to print the most dangerous and the most *burnable*. I shall keep it out of France."

The tide still running strongly against him, he tried his device of bringing out the new play, that "Adélaïde du Guesclin," in which once more he used a romantic French subject of the Middle Ages, and introduced French historic names. The very first act did not escape hissing. During the second, when a Duke de Nemours came upon the stage wounded, his arm in a sling, the audacity of such an approach to naturalness called down a storm of disapproval. In the last act, when the Duke de Vendôme said to the Sire de Couci, "Are you content, Couci?" a person in the pit cried out, *Couci-Couci!* which is a French familiar equivalent of our *So-So*.

[1] Voyage Littéraire, par C. E. Jordan, page 64.

The joke gave a convenient opportunity to an audience that was already in a very damning humor. The theatre resounded with *Couci-Couci;* the curtain went down to the hissing thunder of *Couci-Couci;* and the piece, after one more performance, was shelved for thirty-one years. In 1765 the actors revived it from the self-same copy, and it had a success only less pronounced than that of "Zaïre." For the present, however, this attempt to present the France of 1387 in a romantic light to the France of 1734 only weakened the hold of the author upon his best protector, the public of Paris.

He was in frequent alarm during the rest of the year, for he had now gone so far with his English Letters that at any moment a copy might escape. The little book was published in London, and was printing at Rouen. His letters to Thieriot, Cideville, Jore, and Formont teem with warnings not to let loose a sheet of the work until he gave the signal. There were times, he explained to them, when almost anything could be published with impunity, and there were times when the censorship scented heresy in every doubtful word. Such a time, he said, was then passing over them. "Tell Jore," he kept writing to his Rouen friends, "that if one copy gets out he will find himself in the Bastille, his license forfeited, his family ruined." Several copies, however, reached Paris early in 1734; sent, perhaps, as "feelers." The author wrote to Formont in April, "The Letters philosophical, political, poetical, critical, heretical, and diabolical are going off in London, in English, with great success. But, then, the English are Pope-scorners, cursed of God. The Gallican church, I fear, will be a little harder to please. Jore has promised me a fidelity proof against every temptation. I do not yet know if there has not been some little breach in his virtue. He is strongly suspected in Paris of having sold some copies. He has had upon that subject a little conversation with M. Hérault, lieutenant of police, and, by a miracle greater than all those of Saint Pâris and the Apostles, he is not in the Bastille. He must, however, make up his mind to go thither some day. It appears to me that he has a fixed vocation for that pleasant retreat. I shall try not to have the honor of accompanying him."

For the time the danger seemed averted, and the author

was balked of his purpose to exhibit to France the spectacle of a country governed by law. The marriage of the Duke de Richelieu to the Princess de Guise was about to be celebrated at Monjeu, near Autun, a hundred and fifty miles to the south-east of Paris. This was a marriage of Voltaire's own making, as he tells Cideville. "I conducted the affair like an intrigue of comedy." He also drew up the contract, notary's son as he was, and traveled fifty leagues "to see the happy pair put to bed," in the style of the period. With him went the Marquise du Châtelet, a near relation of the bridegroom, and, probably, other persons invited to the wedding.

This lady, who shared the poet's anxieties with regard to the dreadful book, having even seen some of the proof sheets at the author's abode in the Rue de Longpont, left a servant in Paris with orders to mount at the first rumor of danger, and ride with all speed to give him warning. Friends likely to get earlier news were notified and put on the alert, particularly D'Argental, for fifty years the poet's "guardian angel." "I have a mortal aversion to a prison," wrote Voltaire to him this spring. "I am sick, and close air would kill me."

In May, 1734, while the author was still at Monjeu, the storm burst. All at once, no one knew whence, copies of the book began to circulate everywhere in Paris,—a pirated edition, with the full name of the author on the title-page! Voltaire had sent three copies to be bound, some time before, and at the binder's shop the work was read by a printer, who perceived its salable nature. Penmen sat up all night; the whole book was copied; and, during the Richelieu honeymoon, a large edition was printed. Appended to the work, and designed to be bound with it, the pirate printer found a hundred pages or more of another composition, entitled "Remarks upon the Thoughts of Pascal." The two works had little in common, but they now appeared in the same volume, a mass of heresy and good sense, of solid truth and amusing satire. Pascal was a fascinating subject to Voltaire; as, indeed, he must ever be to susceptible readers, whether they agree or disagree with him. He was an example of a noble nature perverted and prostrated by panic fear. As our Pascal, Jonathan Edwards, was terrified into Calvinism by a fever that caused him to be shaken over the pit of hell, so

this brilliant and lovely Blaise Pascal, the Edwards of France, was made a craven Jansenist by a narrow escape from destruction. As he was riding, one day, in Paris, in a carriage drawn by four horses, the leaders took fright, and, dashing upon a bridge without railings, plunged into the water, and drew the vehicle to the very edge of the bridge. The traces broke, and no one was injured. Pascal, worn by excessive study, nervous and weak, was paralyzed by terror, and, for months after, he fancied that he saw an abyss yawning at his side. Finally, all other fear was merged into one supreme affright: *Another inch, and his soul had been eternally damned!* No more geometry, nor Greek, nor natural science, nor anything else profitable or pleasant. Hair shirt instead; an iron breastplate, with points to pierce his flesh; cruel fasting; abject, incessant prayers. At thirty-nine this gifted man, a noble mind in ruins, had completed his slow suicide, and left behind him those Thoughts of his, to assist in giving another lease of life to the most pernicious theory of man's duty that has ever saddened and demoralized human nature.

Voltaire's comments were moderate and respectful in tone. With his usual adroitness he calls his readers' attention to the difficulties arising from accepting legends as history, rhapsody as prophecy, self-annihilation as virtue. Pascal says, for example, that since there is a God we should love only *him*, not his creatures. Voltaire replies, "We *must* love his creatures, and very tenderly, too,— country, wife, father, children; we must love them so well that God will make them love us, whether we wish it or not." Pascal exalts the Christian religion as holy beyond comparison, and true beyond question. "Think," says Voltaire, "that it was on the way to mass that men committed the massacres of Ireland and St. Bartholomew; and that it was after mass and on account of the mass that so many innocent people, so many mothers, so many children, were murdered in the crusade against the heretics of the south of France. O Pascal! Such are the results of the endless quarrels upon the dogmas, upon the mysteries that could have no results except quarrels. There is not an article of faith which has not given birth to a civil war!"

The volume containing the English Letters and the Re-

marks upon Pascal was denounced early in May, 1734. Every copy that could be found was seized. Jore was arrested and consigned to the Bastille; his edition was confiscated. A *lettre de cachet* was launched against Voltaire. The parliament of Paris condemned the book to be publicly burned by the executioner; which was performed in Paris, June 10, 1734, in the manner before described. The residence of the author was searched, its contents were thrown into confusion, and some money was stolen from it.

May 11th, M. de la Briffe, charged with the duty of arresting the author of the offensive volume, arrived at Monjeu. He was informed that the Duke de Richelieu was gone to the army to join his regiment, — the regiment Richelieu, of which the duke was colonel. As to M. de Voltaire, he had left the château on Thursday last, five days before. He was gone to Lorraine, so the officer was told, to drink the waters; and Lorraine was not yet part of the dominions of the King of France. It is extremely probable that this easy opportunity to get out of the way was intentionally afforded him. M. de la Briffe, it is thought, was neither surprised nor sorry to find the bird flown.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

MADAME DU CHÂTELET AND HER CHÂTEAU.

An amusing page of the St. Simon Memoirs presents to us the Baron de Breteuil, reader to Louis XIV., and afterwards "introducer of ambassadors." This baron, though not wanting in intellect nor in scholarship, was very much the courtier and man of fashion; ill informed on subjects out of the range of the antechamber, but not the less positive on that account in expressing his opinions. In our rough way we should call him a conceited old bore. The Duke de St. Simon more politely says that he was "endured and laughed at." At the table of the minister, M. de Pontchartrain, the baron was discoursing one day in his most fluent and confident manner before a numerous company, when Madame de Pontchartrain said to him, "With all your knowledge, I 'll bet you don't know who composed the Lord's Prayer." The baron laughed, and tried hard to pooh-pooh the question as too trifling to be answered. Madame perceived his embarrassment, and mercilessly pushed her advantage. He contrived to parry her attacks until the company rose to return to the drawing-room. On the way, M. de Caumartin, his relation, whispered in his ear, "Moses!" The baron at once recovered his self-confidence, and, when the guests were seated, renewed the topic, again insisting that he was ashamed to answer a question so trivial. Madame still defying him to name the author, he said at length, "There is no one who does not know that Moses wrote the Lord's Prayer." A roar of laughter followed, and the poor baron, as St. Simon remarks, "could no longer find a door to get out by."[1] It was long before he could forgive Caumartin, and longer before the story ceased to be one of the standard jests of the court.

This Baron de Breteuil was the father of Madame du Châte-

[1] 2 Mémoires de St. Simon, 145. Paris, 1873.

let, whom Voltaire accompanied to the wedding at Monjeu. He had seen her when she was a child; perhaps at the house of M. de Caumartin, when he was a young fugitive from Maître Alain's dusty solicitor's office. She had forgotten him, for they did not meet again until 1733, when she was a married woman, twenty-seven years of age, the mother of three children, namely, Pauline, seven years old, Louis, five, and Victor, an infant, born in April of that very year, 1733.[1]

This lady concerned herself with the paternoster as little as her father, and she was probably neither less fluent nor less positive than the hero of St. Simon's anecdote. At fifteen she began to write a translation of Virgil's "Æneid" in verse, some portions of which Voltaire afterwards read, and often extolled. From childhood she was a student and a reader. It is not necessary to deduct too much from the eulogium of Voltaire, who was her lover for many years and her friend always. Her writings show that she was a woman of some ability, and we know from several well-authenticated anecdotes that her mathematical talent was extraordinary. Born in a better time and reared amid better influences, she might have won the respect of Europe by such work as Mrs. Somerville, Miss Herschel, and Miss Mitchell have since performed, and left a reputation as cheering as theirs.

Her discourse on the "Existence of God" is as good an argument as we can ever expect from a lady who does not perceive the graver and newer difficulties of the question. Her opening remark has been frequently used by theologians since her day, to the effect that God is, if possible, *more* necessary to physical science than to moral, and ought to be the foundation and conclusion of all scientific research. From this she proceeds in the usual way: "Something exists, since I exist; and since something exists, something must always have existed." In treating the question of the origin of evil she uses the metaphysical phrases of the century very neatly, and the composition is one that would do credit to a New England preceptress of a later day.

Not so madame's "Reflections upon Happiness." In order to be happy, she tells us, we must be free from prejudices, virtuous, in good health, capable of illusions, and have tastes

[1] Lettres de la Marquise du Châtelet, Paris, 1878, page 8.

and passions. Rational self-indulgence is her idea of happiness, which is not that of a New England preceptress. In this treatise she breaks occasionally into autobiography: "I have a very good constitution, but I am not robust. There are certain things which surely destroy my health, such as wine, for example, and all sorts of liquors; and so from my earliest youth I have refrained from them. I have a temperament of fire; hence I pass the morning in drowning myself with liquids. Finally, I often give myself up to the pleasures of the table, which God has given me a capacity for; but I make up for those excesses by a severe regimen, which I begin the moment I feel any inconvenience, and thus I always avoid disease."

Beautiful she was not, nor well-formed. She was tall, rather bony, with flat chest and large limbs; but, on the other hand, she had fine eyes and a spacious, noble forehead, abundant fine black hair, and a pleasing cast of countenance. At twenty-seven, when Voltaire renewed his acquaintance with her, she was far from wanting personal charms. So Maupertuis records, who was giving her lessons in geometry at the time; so testifies Madame Denis, Voltaire's niece; and so Latour, the painter of her portrait, which still exists. They all record, too, and the marquise herself mentions the fact, that she was disposed to heighten the effect of her good points by all the means which art and nature have placed within woman's reach. She was fond of dress and decoration, fond of gaming, addicted to all the pleasures of her time and sphere. She played very well on the spinet, and could converse on all the topics, from bricabrac to Newton's "Principia."

At nineteen she was married to the Marquis du Châtelet, an officer of ancient house and dilapidated fortune, a tractable young man, without conversation, with not the least tincture of literature, and extremely complaisant to his wife. The gossip of the day assigned her various lovers, the Duke de Richelieu among the rest; and we have many letters of hers to the duke, written in her later life, and they certainly read like the letters of a woman to a former lover. Neither husband nor wife had any scruples of principle or feeling with regard to miscellaneous amours. Like the society around them, they had resumed the morals of primitive man.

It was early in the summer of 1733, not later than June, that Voltaire and Madame du Châtelet met in Paris: she, a woman of fashion studying mathematics under Maupertuis, and he immersed as usual in poetry and business. They soon became warmly attached to one another. In July he addressed to her a poetical epistle upon Calumny, styling her in the first line *respectable Emilie*. Then we see the lady and her friend, the Duchess de Saint Pierre, surprising the poet in his "hole," as he liked to call his lodgings in the Rue de Longpont. He did his best to entertain them, extemporized a repast of fricasseed chickens, and sent them a poetical invitation to supper. She was *Emilie* to him henceforth as long as she lived. "Who *is* Emilie?" asks Cideville, on reading the epistle upon Calumny. Voltaire replies, "You are Emilie in the form of man, and she is Cideville in that of woman." In November she was taking lessons in English. "She learned it," wrote Voltaire, "in fifteen days. Already she translates at sight; she has had but five lessons of an Irish teacher. Indeed, Madame du Châtelet is a prodigy." He began to think that women could do whatever men could do, and that the only difference between them was that women were more amiable. "My little system," he styled this novel opinion.

What of the Marquis du Châtelet? Nothing at all. He viewed this enthusiastic friendship with an equanimity that was never disturbed. During their *liaison* of sixteen years, this docile and tolerant soldier frequented his abode quite as usual, and remained on the most cordial terms with a poet who lent him money, and drew the fire of a wife perhaps oppressively superior. All this, I repeat, being simply inconceivable to persons of our race, it were useless to expend words upon it. These people had amended one of the ancient commandments by striking out the word *not*, and adding, "but thou shalt commit no indecorum." Voltaire obeyed this latter amendment with ingenious consistency as long as he lived.

It is a wonder how children were brought up under this new dispensation. Many of them were reared by good and faithful servants who adhered to the old dispensation. Some had the ill luck of Talleyrand, whose mother scarcely saw him during his infancy, and who came back to her from his nurse lamed for life. Not a few, doubtless, had the fate which be-

fell the infant of the Marquise du Châtelet. We have a note of hers, written on a Sunday evening in January, 1734, to Maupertuis, her professor of mathematics, which explains what that fate was: "My son died to-night, monsieur. I avow to you that I am extremely afflicted at it, and I shall not go out, as you may well believe. If you wish to come to console me, you will find me alone. I refuse to admit company, but I feel that there is no time when it will not give me extreme pleasure to see you."

In April, 1734, as we have seen, she accompanied Voltaire to the Château de Saint-Blaise, near Autun, the abode of the Prince de Guise, where she witnessed the marriage of a princess of the house to the Duke de Richelieu. It was a honeymoon to two pairs of lovers, those weeks spent at the magnificent château of the Guises. She wrote to Maupertuis that, between Voltaire and the amiable Duchess de Richelieu, she was passing blissful days, and that nothing was wanting to her happiness but her daily lesson in geometry. The soldiers departed at length for the army, leaving to the ladies the full enjoyment of their poet. Dread rumors from Paris arrived to trouble the peace of this Arcadia, and soon a hint came direct from the cabinet of a minister that the author of the English Letters would do well to leave the Château de Saint-Blaise, and "absent himself." He acted upon this hint, and left two ladies inconsolable. The marquise and himself had intended to return to Paris in three weeks, and now, in a moment, they were separated, perhaps never again to meet in France. For some days she thought that probably the *lettre de cachet* had overtaken him, and that he was actually confined in the fortress of Auxonne, to which it consigned him. "If he was in England," she wrote to a friend, May 12th, "I should be less to be pitied. I love my friends with some disinterestedness. His companionship would make the happiness of my life; his safety would make its tranquillity. But to know that he, with such health and imagination as he has, is in a prison, I assure you, I do not find in myself constancy enough to support the idea. Madame de Richelieu is my only consolation, — a charming woman, with a heart capable of friendship and gratitude. She is, if possible, more afflicted than I am; for she owes to him her marriage, the happiness of her life."

News from the fugitive reassured her; at least he was not in a fortress. But the minister was adamant; the parliament of Paris was burning the terrible little book; there was small hope of the author ever being permitted to live again in France. "I shall retire at once to my château," wrote the marquise. "Men have become insupportable; so false are they, so unjust, so full of prejudices, so tyrannical."

Meanwhile she used her knowledge of court and cabinet in his behalf. Born and reared at court, she knew what woman governed each powerful man, what man controlled each influential woman, and how all these were to be reached. She brought to bear her connection, the Duchess d'Aiguillon, upon the Princess de Conti, who had great weight with an adamantine Keeper of the Seals; and, in consequence, better news came from Paris. Hope revived. If Voltaire would disavow the offensive book, the *lettre de cachet* might be canceled, and the storm blow over. It never cost Voltaire the most momentary scruple to disavow anything that had a savor of the Bastille in it. His disavowals never deceived one human being, least of all the ministry that demanded them. They were not intended nor expected to deceive. On this occasion he disavowed, as Madame du Châtelet remarked, "with affecting docility." If she refers to his letter of May, 1734, to the interceding Duchess d'Aiguillon, she uses undescriptive language.

"They say I must retract," he wrote to the amiable duchess. "Very willingly. I will declare that Pascal is always right; that if St. Luke and St. Mark contradict one another it is a proof of the truth of religion to those who know well how to take things; that another lovely proof of religion is that it is unintelligible. I will avow that all priests are gentle and disinterested; that Jesuits are honest people; that monks are neither proud, nor given to intrigue, nor stinking; that the holy inquisition is the triumph of humanity and tolerance. In a word, I will say all that may be desired of me, provided they will leave me in repose, and not indulge the mania to persecute a man who has never done harm to any one, who lives in retirement, and who knows no other ambition but that of paying court to you. It is certain, besides, that the edition was published in spite of me, that many things have been

added to it, and that I have done all that was humanly possible to discover the publisher. Permit me, madame, to renew my thanks and prayers. The favor I ask of the minister is that he will not deprive me of the honor of seeing you. It is a favor for which I should not know how to importune him too much."

Other friends joined their efforts. Madame du Deffand wrought upon M. de Maurepas. The Princess de Conti, the Duchess du Maine, the Duchess de Villars, the Duchess de Richelieu, and other ladies plied their arts and employed their influence, the poet himself ever writing as he flew. The pursuit was relaxed, and Madame du Châtelet was so far reassured as to be able to resume her geometry. She told her Maupertuis that he would find her just where he had left her, having forgotten nothing and learned nothing, but cherishing the same desire to make a progress in geometry worthy of such a master. She had taken up a treatise by Guisnée upon the application of algebra to geometry, but could make nothing of it, and was impatient for his assistance. "You sow flowers upon a road where others find only ruts. Your imagination knows how to embellish the driest subjects without taking from them their accuracy and precision. I feel how much I should lose if I did not profit by your goodness in condescending to my weakness, and in teaching me truths so sublime almost in jesting. I feel that I shall always have over you the advantage of having studied under the most amiable and, at the same time, the most profound mathematician in the world." In many letters of this period she pours forth the warmest expressions of gratitude and affection for her instructor; scolding him also, now and then, for not writing to her oftener than once a week, and failing sometimes to come to her suppers in Paris. In June, she went to Versailles to continue her efforts on behalf of the wanderer, and passed the summer near the court. She was one of the ladies whose rank gave them the right of *tambour* with the queen; that is, the right of sitting on a stool in the queen's presence, a tremendous privilege, to get which women schemed for a life-time, and "jumped the life to come."

The fugitive, where was he? The nobility of a French province were a family party, inhabiting various châteaux, but

connected by all the ties of blood, usage, and interest. During the pleasant weeks of May and June, the poet moved about from château to château once more, always near the border, constantly advised of possible danger by madame la marquise, and obeying her injunctions with "affecting docility." He spent some days at Cirey, in Champagne, where the Du Châtelets had an old château; and while there he heard news that drew his attention from his own affairs, and changed the direction of his thoughts. The Duke de Richelieu, on rejoining his regiment before Philipsburgh (now Udenheim) in Baden, met some of his new relatives of the house of Guise, two of whom, the Prince de Lixin and the Prince de Pons, had refused to sign the marriage contract. They objected to a marriage negotiated by a poet as he would have arranged a marriage in the last act of a comedy. An altercation occurred, ending in a duel between the bridegroom and M. de Lixin. The rumor reached Voltaire that the Prince de Lixin had died upon the field, and that the Duke de Richelieu was severely wounded, perhaps mortally. He hastened to the camp, appalled at such a tragic ending of his comedy. He found both combatants in very good condition; at least, not seriously damaged, and able to bear the hardships of war. Colonel the Duke de Richelieu was making war in the true Xerxes manner, with a personal train of seventy mules, thirty horses, and a proportionate number of servants. Other great lords were similarly equipped. The author, proscribed at Paris, was received with enthusiasm at the camp, where he was fêted by princes and marshals, and where, perhaps, he tasted the provisions supplied by Duverney and Voltaire, contractors. The ministry, supposing that his visit to the army was of the nature of a bravado, hardened towards him again, and Madame du Châtelet advised him to cut his visit short. The siege, moreover, was becoming more active than was convenient to visitors.

"The troops show great ardor [he wrote to a lady of Cirey, July 1st]. It is astonishing. We swear we will beat the Prince Eugène; we are not afraid of him; but, notwithstanding, we intrench to the teeth; we have lines, a ditch, pits, and another ditch in advance, — a new invention, which looks very pretty and very well contrived to break the necks of people who come to attack our lines. All the

indications are that the Prince Eugène is going to attempt the passage of the pits and the ditches about four in the morning, to-morrow, Friday, the day of the Virgin. He is said to be much devoted to Mary, and she is likely to side with him against our general, who is a Jansenist. You are aware, madame, that you Jansenists are suspected not to be sufficiently devoted to the Virgin; you ridicule the society of Jesuits, and *Paradise opened to Philagie by one hundred and one Devotions to the Mother of God.* We shall see to-morrow for whom victory will declare itself. Meanwhile, we cannonade one another powerfully. The lines of our camp are fringed by eighty pieces of cannon, which are beginning to play. Yesterday we finished carrying a certain horn-work, half of which M. de Belle-Isle had already taken. Twelve officers of the guards were wounded at that cursed work. Behold, madame, human folly in all its glory and all its horror! I intend to leave forthwith the sojourn of bombs and bullets."

Toward the end of July, after a merry visit of two or three weeks, he left the camp, and returned to his "hiding-place;" for so he called the dilapidated old castle belonging to the Marquis du Châtelet, in Champagne, — "my château," to which madame la marquise threatened to retire from contact with prejudiced, proud, and tyrannical men. The lady had rarely, if ever, lived in this sequestered relic of the thirteenth century. It was, indeed, scarcely inhabitable without extensive repairs, which the family could not afford. The marquis had no great income for his rank; and he had a wife fond of play and pleasure; he had two children; he had a lawsuit of eighty years' standing; he belonged to an army of which a colonel could take to the field a retinue of one hundred animals and thirty servants. At the best, the château of Cirey would not naturally have been an inviting abode to a lady accustomed from infancy to the magnificences of Versailles and the charms of Fontainebleau. Suddenly, however, the old castle near the border (and because it was near the border) became an object of extreme interest to madame, to her poet, and to a complaisant husband.

A dream of a place in the country, a lodge in some accessible, well-kept, pleasant wilderness, where glorious things could be composed in peace and love, far from the distractions of the world, floats ever before the minds of the toil-worn votaries of literature. "I have a passion for retirement,"

Voltaire repeats many times. "I am a fawn, out of place except in sylvan scenes," he writes more than once. He truly loved the country, as actors love it, as many other men love it whose occupations are extremely remote from country things and ways. The idea now occurred to convert this ancient abode of the Du Châtelets into such a retreat as he had longed for, to which all of them could remove, the marquis, madame, the children, and the poet, making it their chief abode; where a persecuted author could write immortal works, and a lady of great intellect could study mathematics and compose treatises on the Existence of a Supreme Being. So thought, so done. Voltaire had the honor of lending the marquis forty thousand francs for repairs, at an interest of five per cent., not paid, and the work of reparation was begun at once.[1]

Cirey-sur-Blaise (there are six Cireys in France) is a hard place to find, whether you look for it on the map or in the department of Haute-Marne, as that part of the old province of Champagne is now called. A part of the old château still stands, and belongs to the estate of a descendant of the Du Châtelets, the late Marquis de Damas. In 1863, the historian, George Grote, gave up the project of a pilgrimage to it. "We next," records Mrs. Grote, "made a *détour* for the express purpose of visiting the Château de Cirey, dear to us both as the residence, a century ago, of Voltaire and Madame du Châtelet. But in this pious pilgrimage we were defeated by the difficulty of obtaining any manner of conveyance to Cirey. We got within sixteen English miles of it at Joinville; from which pleasant village we could find neither cart nor carriage for love or money during our stay."[2] They should have gone to Chaumont-sur-Marne, the chief town of the department, a city of seven thousand inhabitants, the centre of the iron trade and of the iron manufacture of that iron-yielding region. The landlord of the "Ecu de France" would probably have been only too happy to provide a vehicle for illustrious English travelers.

It was already a land of forges and iron mines when Voltaire went into hiding there in the summer of 1734, the famous wine country lying a little to the north of it, and showing such

[1] Voltaire to Comtesse de Montrevel, November 15, 1749. 72 Œuvres, 92

[2] Personal Life of George Grote, by Mrs. Grote, page 270.

names as Sillery, Epernay, Verzenay, and others that now figure on the labels of wine bottles. Around Cirey the country is generally hard and uninteresting, as beseems a region that supplies France with iron, charcoal, marble, grindstones, glass, building stone, and a thousand articles of cutlery and iron ware. The château had only its great antiquity, its romantic aspect, and its great size to recommend it; an extensive edifice, with a chapel and all the other appurtenances of a feudal residence of the time of the Crusades, but with scarcely a window or door capable of keeping out wind and rain. A few thousand francs, expended by a man who knows how to get a franc's worth for every franc, will make some corners of an old château inhabitable, and this was done at Cirey. He began the work in August, 1734, while Madame du Châtelet was still at court ameliorating ministers.

In the absence of the lord and lady of the château he was very much the grand seigneur; at least, he played the part with grace and effect. "I take the liberty of sending you a boar's head," he writes to a neighbor, the Countess de la Neuville. "This *monsieur* has just been assassinated, in order to give me an opportunity of paying my court to you." I sent for a buck, but none could be found. This boar was destined to give you his head. I swear to you that I think very little of the head of a wild pig, and I believe it is only eaten from vanity. If I had taken nothing but a lark, I should have offered it to you, all the same." In return, the countess sends the lord *pro tem.* a basket of peaches. He is occupied, meanwhile, with leads for the roof, with fire-places, carriage-ways, chimney-pots, surrounded by masons and heaps of old plaster. New workmen arrive. "I write their names every day in a large account-book; I cannot leave the château until some one comes to relieve me." But he could write verses for the ladies and retouch his opera of "Samson" for Rameau in the midst of chaos. If the warning comes from Paris, he can skip over the border. He did so in October, and went as far as Brussels, returning, after a few weeks' absence, to welcome Madame du Châtelet, who was coming to join him.

Chaos itself was now confused. On a certain day in November arrived from Paris "two hundred packages," harbingers

of the lady of the château. Next came a letter from her, saying that she had been detained, and could not come as soon as she had appointed. Lastly, at the close of the day, in the midst of all this litter, madame herself arrived, "in a kind of two-horse cart," bruised, shaken, tired, but very well. She found that, if much had been done, more remained to do: beds without curtains, rooms without windows, closets full of old china, but no easy-chairs, beautiful vehicles and no horses to draw them, an abundance of ancient tapestry hanging in tatters. She entered upon the work of restoration with zest, and speedily undid much that her poet had done. "She has windows put," he wrote to Madame de la Neuville, "where I had made doors. She changes stairs into chimneys, and chimneys into stairs. She has lindens planted where I had proposed elms, and if I had laid out a vegetable garden she turns it into flower beds. Besides this, she does fairy work in her house. She converts rags into tapestry, and finds the secret of furnishing Cirey out of nothing." Several weeks were spent in work of this kind, and gradually portions of "the most dilapidated château on earth," as Voltaire called it, became inhabitable and presentable. He had bought a valuable picture, now and then, of late years as opportunity offered, and thus he was able to hang a considerable number of fine works upon these ancient walls. Horses were procured; and soon madame had, among other carriages, "a little phaeton as light as a feather, drawn by horses as big as elephants."

At Christmas she was at Paris again, attending "the midnight mass" with Maupertuis, and taking him home with her to supper, after that festivity. She was there to be near Madame de Richelieu in her confinement, and to effect the canceling of the *lettre de cachet*. She passed the first weeks of 1735 between the bedside of the duchess and the cabinet of M. de Maurepas, with happy results both to the lady and the poet. March 2, 1735, the lieutenant of police wrote to Voltaire a letter worthy of a "paternal government": —

"His Eminence and Monsieur the Keeper of the Seals have charged me, monsieur, to inform you that you are at liberty to return to Paris whenever you think proper. This permission is given on condition that you will occupy yourself here with objects which shall afford no grounds of complaint against

you, like those of the past. The more talent you have, monsieur, the more you ought to feel that you have enemies and jealous competitors. Shut their mouths, then, forever, by a course of conduct worthy of a wise man and of a man who has now reached a certain age."

This epistle, which found him still immersed in the details of reparation, had no effect upon the scheme of retirement. He showed himself in Paris for a few weeks in the spring, to notify friends and enemies that he was free to come and go like other men. He knew that Paris could not then be a safe place of residence for him; and even during this short stay rumors reached him of the currency of portions of his "Pucelle." There were lines in that burlesque which, under De Fleury and Maurepas, might have doomed the author to one of the wet dungeons of the Bastille. He withdrew in haste, and, after spending some time in Lorraine, returned to Cirey to continue the battle with chaos. He did not enjoy it. "I am worried with details. So afraid am I of making bad bargains, and so tired of urging on the workmen, that I have asked for a man to help me." But no day passed without its verse. In December, 1734, he could tell Cideville that, during the eight months of his "retreat," he had written "three or four thousand verses," and he sent to D'Argental a portion of the same in the form of a new tragedy, "Alzire."

Cirey was his home henceforth as long as Madame du Châtelet lived. He often fled from it at the rumor of danger. He sometimes remained for considerable periods at Paris and elsewhere; but Cirey was his home, to which he removed the works of art and curiosity, the books and memoranda, that he had accumulated in a life of forty years. He lived there, as far as visitors could usually discern, very much as an uncle might, — one of those good uncles who, having missed a happiness of their own, share by enhancing that of a brother or a sister; an uncle who has plenty of money, and gives watches to his nephews and nieces on their sixteenth birthday, and suddenly appears on the lawn, of a May morning, leading rapture in the guise of a pony. In the absence of visitors, the marquise and himself spent laborious days in study and composition, each remaining alone for seven and eight hours of the day, and meeting in the evening at the French sacrament of supper.

When a poet settled in the country, he was expected to dignify his abode with inscriptions, and he usually fulfilled this expectation. Voltaire's first attempt — a Latin couplet, as written in a letter to a friend — contained errors that have since given much consolation to clerical critics. It was designed for a small addition to the château which he had caused to be built, and which in this couplet he called *casa*, making both its syllables long. In the ancient republic of letters this was a capital offense. If Mr. Grote had pushed on to Cirey, he might have discovered that, before having the inscription engraved, Voltaire corrected the error. It reads thus upon one of the doors of the old château: —

"Hæc ingens incœpta domus fit parva; sed ævum
Degitur hîc felix et bene, magna sat est."[1]

Two other inscriptions, one in Latin and one in French, were until recently to be seen upon the door of a gallery which he built for philosophical apparatus. The Latin inscription, a reminiscence of Horace, expressly notified visitors, and through them the rest of Europe, that, Here, far from the haunts of men, was concealed a Poet, who was also a lover of virtue, a despiser of the crowd and the court, a cultivator of friendship. The following were the words of this inscription, which is now no longer to be found in the neighborhood of the château: —

"Hîc virtutis amans, vulgi contemptor et aulæ,
Cultor amicitiæ vates latet abditus agro."

A French inscription was placed under this, and may have been engraved there a little later: —

"Asile des beaux-arts, solitude où mon cœur
Est toujours occupé dans une paix profonde,
C'est vous qui donnez le bonheur
Que promettrait en vain le monde."[2]

He had an unequaled facility in the trifles of poetry, many of which are so happy that, even in a prose translation, they are not devoid of interest. During the first year or two of his settlement at Cirey he composed a great number of inscrip-

[1] This house, begun on a vast scale, becomes small; but time passes here happily and well; it is large enough.

[2] Asylum of the fine arts, solitude in which my heart is always occupied in profound peace, it is you that give the happiness which the world would promise in vain.

tions, impromptus, epigrams, snatches of verse in letters, compliments to ladies at table, satirical couplets, and rhymed invitations. I select two or three, not usually accessible except to inhabitants of cities. He winds up an invitation thus: —

"Certain vin frais, dont la mousse pressée
De la bouteille avec force élancée,
Avec éclat fait voler le bouchon;
Il part, on rit, il frappe le plafond.
De ce nectar l'écume petillante
De nos Français est l'image brillante."[1]

The following is upon the château of Cirey: —

"Un voyageur, qui ne mentit jamais,
Passe à Cirei, l'admire, le contemple;
Il croit d'abord que ce n'est qu'un palais;
Mais il voit Emilie. Ah! dit-il, c'est un temple."[2]

This was addressed to Madame du Châtelet upon his seeing her deep in algebra: —

"Sans doute vous serez célèbre
Par les grands calculs de l'algèbre
Où votre esprit est absorbé:
J'oserais m'y livrer moi-même:
Mais, hélas! A + D — B
N'est pas = à *je vous aime.*"[3]

One addressed to an officer who had some of his hair cut off by a cannon ball at a siege, and was not promoted for it, was much celebrated at the time: —

"Des boulets allemands la pesante tempête
A, dit-on, coupé vos cheveux:
Les gens d'esprit sont fort heureux
Qu'elle ait respecté votre tête.
On prétend que César, le phénix des guerriers,
N'ayant plus de cheveux, se coiffa de lauriers:
Cet ornement est beau, mais n'est plus de ce monde.
Si César nous était rendu,
Et qu'en servant Louis il eût été tondu,
Il n'y gagnerait rien qu'une perruque blonde."[4]

[1] A certain cool wine, the confined froth of which shot from the bottle with force, makes the cork fly; it starts, we laugh, it hits the ceiling. The sparkling foam of this nectar is the brilliant image of our Frenchmen.

[2] A traveler, who never lies, passes by Cirey, admires it, contemplates it. At first he believes it is only a palace; but he sees Emilie. "Ah," he says, "it is a temple."

[3] Doubtless you will become famous through the grand calculations of algebra in which your mind is absorbed. I should dare to devote myself to them; but, alas! A plus D minus B is not equal to *I love you.*

[4] The weighty tempest of German bullets has, they say, cut your hair. Men of letters are very glad it respected your head. It is said that Cæsar, the phœnix

It were easy to fill ten pages of this volume from the light and sparkling verses of this period, if not from those addressed to Madame du Châtelet alone. I yield to the temptation of copying one more, upon Idleness, which was written to rouse the idle Linant to exertion, but written in vain: —

"Connaissez mieux l'oisiveté:
Elle est ou folie ou sagesse;
Elle est vertu dans la richesse,
Et vice dans la pauvreté.
On peut jouir en paix, dans l'hiver de sa vie,
De ces fruits qu'au printemps sema notre industrie:
Courtisans de la gloire, écrivains ou guerriers,
Le sommeil est permis, mais c'est sur des lauriers." [1]

of warriors, having lost his hair, covered his head with laurels. That ornament is beautiful, but no longer in fashion. If Cæsar were restored to us, and if, while serving Louis, he had been shorn, he would gain nothing by it but a blonde peruke.

[1] Understand idleness better. It is either folly or wisdom; it is virtue in wealth and vice in poverty. In the winter of our life, we can enjoy in peace the fruits which in its spring our industry planted. Courtiers of glory, writers or warriors, slumber is permitted you, but only upon laurels.

CHAPTER XXIX.

MAN OF BUSINESS.

To almost any man of letters it would have been a disadvantage to live a hundred and forty miles from the capital. With such roads and vehicles as they had then in France, it was usually a journey of three or four days from Cirey to Paris, and might be one of five or six. The château was literally "twelve miles from a lemon;" but a coach from Paris appears to have passed near it two or three times a week, and there were villages four or five miles distant. Chaumont and Joinville, either of which might have sometimes furnished a lemon, were from twelve to sixteen miles away. Another difficulty was that all letters intrusted to the mail were liable to be opened, and the letters of Voltaire were sure to be. He was more than an author: he was importer, merchant, contractor, speculator, capitalist, money-lender; and he was now buried alive in the depths of Champagne, reputed to be the most provincial province of France! "Ninety-nine sheep and one Champagne man make a hundred beasts," says the old French proverb.

To his other labors were to be added those of a student and experimenter in science, a fashion then in Europe, and he cultivated this new field with his own ardor and tenacity. Every week he wanted something from Paris; every day some interest of his required intelligent attention. The literary news was necessary to him. Frequently he needed information from brother chemists and philosophers upon some point not yet elucidated in books. Often he wanted books hard to find, materials little known, apparatus not kept for sale. All this business he managed with that ease, tact, and success which usually marked his direction of mundane things.

Among his acquaintances at the capital there was a certain Abbé Moussinot, a kind of clerical notary, who conducted the

business affairs of his chapter, who knew how to "place" and how to collect money, and who speculated a little on his own account in pictures and rare objects. For eight years or more Voltaire had had dealings with him, had bought pictures of him, had employed him in transactions and negotiations, and had found him intelligent, prompt, faithful, secret. It was through this shrewd, obliging, and silent abbé that he kept open lines of communication with his base of supplies during the first years of his residence at Cirey. There is nothing in the vast range of his correspondence more characteristic than his familiar letters to the Abbé Moussinot, of which we possess about one hundred and fifty. Before entering upon his intellectual life in Champagne, his most brilliant, fertile, and effective period, I will seize the opportunity of presenting him to the reader as man of business. The most agreeable way of doing this will be simply to translate a few of these letters, and leave the reader to make his own comments and deductions. It is only necessary to bear in mind that, while he was writing these letters and managing an estate of sixty thousand francs a year, he was the most diligent and absorbed literary man in Europe, the dramatist of his age, the most productive of living authors, who was making wide and peculiar researches in history, ancient and modern, and was full of the new zeal for scientific experiment. He was also a correspondent punctual and profuse; and when a visitor arrived at the château he could appear wholly the man of pleasure, and arrange a series of entertainments that made life pass like a dream of festivity.

LETTERS FROM VOLTAIRE TO THE ABBÉ MOUSSINOT.

[March 21, 1736.] "My dear Abbé, — I love your strong-box a thousand times better than that of a notary; there is no one in the world whom I trust as I do you; you are as intelligent as you are virtuous. You were made to be the solicitor-general of the order of the Jansenists, for you know that they call their union the *Order;* it is their cant; every community, every society, has its cant. Consider, then, if you are willing to take charge of the funds of a man who is not devout, and to do from friendship for that undevout man what you do for your chapter as a duty. You will be able in this way to make some good bargains in buying pictures; you will borrow from me some of the money in your strong-box. My affairs, as you know,

are very easy and very simple; you will be my superintendent wherever I may be myself; you will speak for me, and in your own name, to the Villars, to the Richelieus, to the D'Estaings, to the Guises, to the Guébriants, to the D'Auneuils, to the Lézeaux, and to other illustrious debtors of your friend. When a man speaks for his friend he asks justice; when it is I who solicit that justice, I have the air of asking a favor, and it is this that I wish to avoid. This is not all: you will act as my plenipotentiary, whether for my pensions payable by M. Paris-Duverney, by M. Tannevot, first clerk of the finances, or for the interest due me from the Hôtel-de-Ville, from Arouet, my brother, as well as for the bonds and money which I have at different notaries. You will have, my dear abbé, *carte-blanche* for all that which concerns me, and everything will be conducted in the greatest secrecy. Write me word if this charge is agreeable to you. Meanwhile, I pray you to send your *frotteur* to find a young man named Baculard d'Arnaud:[1] he is a student in philosophy at the College of Harcourt; he lives in the Rue Mouffetard. Give him, I beg you, this little manuscript [the "Epistle upon Calumny"], and make him from me a little present of twelve francs. I entreat you not to neglect this small favor which I ask you; this manuscript will be sold for his advantage. I embrace you with all my heart; love me always, and, especially, let us bind the bonds of our friendship closer by mutual confidence and reciprocal services."

[May 22, 1736.] "To punish you, my dear friend, for not having sent to find the young Baculard d'Arnaud, student in philosophy at the College of Harcourt, and living with M. Delacroix, Rue Mouffetard, — to punish you, I say, for not having given him the 'Epistle upon Calumny' and twelve francs, I condemn you to give him a louis d'or, and to exhort him from me to learn to write, which will contribute to his fortune. This is a little work of charity which, whether Christian or mundane, must not be neglected. . . . . I expect news from you with impatience, and I embrace you with all my heart. I write to this young D'Arnaud. Instead of twenty-four francs, give him thirty livres when he comes to see you. I am going to seal my letter quick for fear that I augment the sum. *Received thirty livres. Signed, Baculard d'Arnaud.*"[2]

[September, 1736.] "Thirty-five thousand francs for tapestries of the 'Henriade'! That is much, my dear treasurer. It would be necessary, before all, to know how much the tapestry of Don Quixote sold for; it would be necessary, especially before commencing, that M. de Richelieu should pay me my fifty thousand francs. Let us sus-

[1] Voltaire's literary correspondent at Paris.

[2] Lettres de Voltaire à l'Abbé Moussinot. Paris, 1875, page 6.

pend, then, every project of tapestry, and let M. Oudri do nothing without more ample information. Buy for me, my dear abbé, a little table which may serve at once as screen and writing-desk, and send it in my name to the house of Madame de Winterfield,[1] Rue Plâtrière. Still another pleasure. There is a Chevalier de Mouhi, who lives at the Hotel Dauphin, Rue des Orties; this chevalier wishes to borrow of me a hundred pistoles, and I am very willing to lend them to him. Whether he comes to your house, or whether you go to his, I pray you to say to him that I take pleasure in obliging literary men when I can, but that I am actually very much embarrassed in my affairs; that nevertheless you will do all you can to find this money, and that you hope the reimbursement will be secured in such a way that there will be nothing to risk; after which you will have the goodness to inform me who this chevalier is, as well as the result of these preliminaries. Eighteen francs to the little D'Arnaud. Tell him I am sick and cannot write. Pardon all these trifles. I am a very tedious dabbler, but I love you with all my heart."

[July 30, 1736.] "The little table with a screen, which I asked you to buy for Madame de Winterfield, Rue Plâtrière, near Saint-Jacques, is a trifle. It must be very simple and a very good bargain."

[Summer, 1736.] "Oudri, my dear abbé, appears to me expensive; but if he makes two sets of hangings, can we not have them a little cheaper? I might be able even to have three of them made. If M. de Richelieu pays me, it will be well for me to invest my money in that way. The countenance of Henry IV. and that of Gabrielle d'Estrées in tapestry will succeed very well. Good Frenchmen will wish to have some Gabrielles and Henrys, especially if the good Frenchmen are rich. We are not very rich ourselves, just now; but the holy time of Christmas will give us, I hope, some consolation. Cannot Chevalier come to Cirey to execute under my own eyes designs from the 'Henriade'? Does he know enough of his art for that? They speak well of him, but he has not yet sufficient reputation to be unteachable. It is said there is at Paris a man who draws portraits to be worn in rings in a perfect manner. I have seen a face of Louis XV. of his doing, which was an excellent likeness. Have the goodness, my dear abbé, to disinter this man. You will find it impertinent that the same hand should paint the king and poor me; but friendship wishes it, and I obey friendship.[2] The Chevalier de

[1] This was Olimpe Dunoyer, the young lady with whom Voltaire was in love during his first residence in Holland, in 1713.

[2] The artist in question was Barrier, an engraver of precious stones, who made a ring portrait of Voltaire for Madame du Châtelet soon after the date of this letter.

Mouhi, then, will send twice a week to Cirey the gossip of Paris. Enjoin it upon him to be infinitely secret; give him a hundred crowns, and promise him a payment once a month, or every three months, as he prefers. I treat you, my dear friend, as I beg you will treat me. I should be glad to be so happy as to receive some orders from you."

[October 27, 1736.] "I could wish, my dear and faithful treasurer, to have, under the greatest secrecy, some ready money deposited with a discreet and faithful notary, which he could place at interest for a time, and which, if necessary, I could get back without delay. The sum would be fifty thousand francs, and perhaps more. Are you not acquainted with a notary in whom you could confide? The whole would be in your name. I am very much discontented with M. Perret; he has two excellent qualities for a public man, he is brutal and indiscreet. . . . . Have the goodness to give another louis d'or to D'Arnaud. Tell him then to have himself called simply D'Arnaud; that is a fine Jansenist name; Baculard is ridiculous."

[February, 1737.] "I find myself, my dear treasurer, in the situation of always having before me a large sum of money to dispose of. Your letters will be henceforth addressed to Madame d'Azilli, at Cirey. Put nothing in them too clearly which might reveal that it is I to whom you write. I find my obscurity convenient. I wish to have no correspondence with any one; I pretend to be ignored of all the world except you, whom I love with all my heart, and whom I beg very earnestly to find me a literary correspondent who will give me news with exactness, and whom you will leave in ignorance of my retreat."

[March 18, 1737.] "The principal of the debt of M. de Richelieu is 46,417 livres; date, May 5, 1735."[1]

[March, 1737.] "I am very glad, my dear correspondent, that M. Berger thinks I am in England. I am there for all the world except you. Send, I pray you, a hundred louis d'or to M. the Marquis du Châtelet, who will bring them to me. Now, my dear abbé, are you willing that I should speak to you frankly? It is necessary for you to do me the favor of accepting every year a little honorarium, merely as a mark of my friendship. Let us not beat about the bush. You have a small salary from your canons; treat me as a chapter; take twice as much every year from your friend, the poet-philosopher, as your cloister gives you; this without prejudice to the gratitude which I shall always cherish. Arrange this and love me."

[April, 1737.] "I repeat to you, my tender friend, my urgent request not to speak of my affairs to any one, and especially to say that I am in England. I have the very strongest reasons for that.

[1] Lettres de Voltaire à l'Abbé Moussinot. Paris, 1775, page 26.

In the present critical situation of my affairs, it would be very imprudent for me to embark in the commerce with Pinega a large sum, which would be too long in yielding returns. Therefore, let us not invest in that commerce more than four or five thousand francs for our amusement; a like sum in pictures, which will amuse you still more. The paper of the farmers-general brings in six per cent. a year; it is the surest investment of money. Amuse yourself again in that. Buy some bonds. That merchandise will fall in a short time; at least, I think so; that is another honest recreation for a canon; and I leave to your intelligence everything that relates to those amusements. Besides, let us put into the hands of M. Michel, whose probity and fortune you know, one half of our ready money at five per cent., and not more; were it only for six months, that would produce something. In the matter of interest nothing must be neglected, and in investing our money we must always conform to the law of the prince. Let all that, like my other affairs, be a profound secret. Still eighteen francs to D'Arnaud, and two 'Henriades.' I see that I give you more trouble than all your chapter, but I shall not be so ungrateful."

[April 14, 1737.] "M. the Abbé de Breteuil has come here. He is in quest of some engravings for his rooms; if I have still half a dozen pretty enough, you will do me, my dear friend, the favor to send them. You will have the goodness to send with them a word or two, in the way of a note, to the effect that, having recommended that the engravings of mine which are left should be presented to him, you have but these, and he is requested to accept them. Besides the two thousand four hundred francs which you are to give to the Marquis du Châtelet, it is necessary to give him fifty livres. It is necessary also, my dear abbé, to find a man who will give us at Cirey twice a week a letter of news. I ask a thousand pardons, my generous correspondent, for the tiresome details of my commissions, but you must have pity upon country people, by whom you are tenderly loved."

[May, 1737.] "You are going, then, to Rouen, my dear treasurer? See, I pray you, the Marquis de Lézeau. Speak to him of the poverty of our cash-box. I am confident that you will induce him to pay; you have the gift of persuasion. It is, my dear abbé, of absolute necessity that I should know how it is that I have forgotten having given a receipt to M. the President d'Auneuil. It must be some one else who has given this receipt, and who has received the money for me; it is from the mouth of Demoulin that you can know whether this money has been received or not. Mesnil, the notary, delivered it; Demoulin ought to have received it. This man, who

robbed me of twenty thousand francs, and who is an ingrate, could he have pilfered also that half year's payment? It is necessary to address ourselves to those two individuals in order to know the truth; and if neither of them remember the facts it will be well that M. d'Auneuil should be informed that I know no more of the matter than they. In matters of interest and money we cannot be too careful and exact; we should foresee everything and guard against everything. M. de Richelieu owes only for one year; it is not proper to demand that year's interest at a time when he is paying me forty-three thousand two hundred francs. I would not hinder him, however, from giving me some ready money, if he wishes to do so; but I shall be very content with a good assignment, as well for the two thousand nine hundred livres of arrears which I am still to receive from him as for the annuity of four thousand francs which he pays me every year. In that case he would be importuned no more, and our affairs would be more according to rule and easier to manage. You can, my dear abbé, send by the coach, in perfect safety, three hundred louis well packed, without saying what they are and without expense, provided the box be well and duly registered as containing valuables; that will suffice. Besides these three hundred louis, I must have a draft for two thousand four hundred francs; the receiver-general of Champagne will give you this draft for your money. Any banker will tell you the name and residence of the receiver-general. I am ashamed of all the trouble I give you, and I am obliged to avow, my dear friend, that you were made to manage greater affairs than the treasury of a chapter of Saint Merri and the revenue of a philosopher who embraces you with all his heart. In this world one is rarely what he ought to be."

[May, 1737.] "The man who has the secret of spinning brass is not the only one; but I believe that only a little of it can be spun, and that it easily breaks. Sound this man of brass; we might be able to have him here, and give him a chamber, a laboratory, his board, and a salary of a hundred crowns. It would be in his power to make some experiments, and to try and make steel, which assuredly is much easier than to make gold. If he has the misfortune to seek the philosopher's stone, I am not surprised that from six thousand francs a year he is reduced to nothing. A philosopher who has six thousand francs a year has the philosopher's stone. That stone brings us, very naturally, to speak of affairs of interest. Here is the certificate which you ask for. I repeat to you my prayers that M. de Guise, M. de Lézeau, and others may be written to without delay; that you see M. Paris-Duverney, and let him know that he will give me great pleasure if he permits me to enjoy the pension from

the queen and from the royal treasury, of which I am in very great need, and for which I shall be much obliged. Be willing also, my dear abbé, to arrange, in some amiable way, my annuity, my capital overdue, and the arrears, with the steward of M. de Richelieu; the whole without betraying an unbecoming distrust. That ought to have been done more than a month ago. An assurance of regular payment would spare the duke disagreeable details, would deliver his steward from great embarrassment, would spare you, my dear friend, many useless steps, many fatiguing and unfruitful labors. We shall say more of this another time, for I am afraid of forgetting to ask you for a very good air-pump, which is hard to find; a good reflecting telescope, which is at least as rare; the volumes of pieces which have been crowned at the Academy. Such are the learned things which my little learned mind has very urgent need of. I have, my dear abbé, neither the time nor the strength to continue, nor even to thank you for the chemist whom you sent me. As yet, I have scarcely seen him, except at mass; he loves solitude; he ought to be content. I shall not be able to work with him in chemical matters until an apartment which I am building is finished; till then, we must each of us study apart, and you must love me always."

[May, 1737.] "It is necessary, my dear friend, to ask, to ask again, to press, to see, to importune, and not persecute my debtors for my annuities and arrears. A letter costs nothing; two are only a very trifling embarrassment, and serve the purpose that a debtor cannot complain if I am obliged to avail myself of legal means of redress. After two letters to the farmers at an interval of a month, and a little word of excuse to the masters, it will be necessary to issue formal demands to the farmers of the lands upon which my annuities are secured. I will send you the list of them. For the rest of my life it will be with the farmers that I shall have to do. That will be a much better plan. Pinga says everywhere that he is selling my effects, and that has a much worse effect than all I sell. I flatter myself, my dear friend, that you will keep much better the secret of all my affairs. You have, God be thanked, all the good qualities."

[May, 1737.] "Great thanks, my dear abbé, for the present given to La Mare, and the more because it is the last which my affairs permit me to accord him. If ever he comes to importune you, do not let him take up your time. Reply that you have nothing to do with my business; that cuts the matter short. Ascertain if it is true that this little gentleman, whom I have overwhelmed with benefits, rails also against me. Speak to Demoulin gently. He ought indeed to blush at his conduct towards me; he has deprived me of twenty thousand francs, and wishes to dishonor me. In losing twenty thousand francs

I need not acquire an enemy. Another request, my dear abbé. A friend, who asks of me an inviolable secrecy, charges me to ascertain what is the subject of the prize essay announced this year by the Academy of Sciences. I know no man more secret than you : it will be you, then, my dear friend, who will render us this service. If I were to write to some member of the Academy, he would think, perhaps, that I wished to compete for the prize; that would suit neither my age nor my defective knowledge."

[June, 1737.] "Arm yourself with courage, my dear and amiable agent, for to-day I am going to be exceedingly troublesome. Here is a learned negotiation, in which it is necessary, if you please, that you succeed, and that I be not found out. A visit to M. de Fontenelle, and a long explanation upon what is understood by the propagation of fire. Disputants, among whom I sometimes take a fancy to thrust myself, discuss the question whether fire has or has not weight. M. Lémeri, whose 'Chemistry' you sent me, asserts (chapter v.) that, after having calcined twenty pounds of lead, he found it increased in weight five pounds; he does not say whether he weighed the earthen vessel in which the calcination was made, to ascertain if any carbon had joined itself to the lead; he supposes simply, or rather boldly, that the lead has absorbed some particles of fire, which have augmented its weight. Five pounds of fire! Five pounds of light! That is admirable, and so admirable that I do not believe it. Other scientific men have made experiments with a view to ascertain the weight of fire. They have put filings of copper and filings of tin into glass retorts hermetically sealed; they have calcined these filings, and they have found them increased in weight: an ounce of copper has acquired forty-nine grains, and an ounce of tin four grains. Antimony calcined by the rays of the sun, by means of the burning glass, has also increased in weight in the hands of the chemist, Homberg. I wish that all those statements may be true; I wish that the matter in which the metals were held during calcination may not have contributed to increase the weight of those metals; but I who speak to you have weighed more than a thousand pounds of red-hot iron, and I have afterwards weighed it cold. I have not found a grain of difference. Now it would be very curious that twenty pounds of lead, calcined, should gain five pounds in weight, and that a thousand pounds of red-hot iron should not weigh one grain the heavier. Such, my dear abbé, are the difficulties which for a month past have wearied the head of your friend, little accustomed to physical investigations, and rendered him uncertain in chemistry, just as other difficulties of a different order render him shaky upon some points little important of scholastic theology. In every science we seek the truth in good faith, and, when

we think we have found it, we are often embracing only an error. Now for the favor which I ask of you. Go to your neighbor, M. Geoffroy, apothecary to the Academy of Sciences; get into conversation with him by means of half a pound of quinquina, which you will buy and send to me. Ask him respecting the experiments of Lémeri, of Homberg, and mine. You are a very skillful negotiator; you will easily find out what M. Geoffroy thinks of all that, and you will tell me what he says, — the whole without committing me. I am, as you see, my dear friend, much occupied with physical matters; but I do not forget that superfluity which they name the necessary.[1] I hope that Hébert will not delay to finish it, and that he will spare nothing in rendering it elegant and magnificent."

[June 29, 1737.] "Are you willing, my dear friend, to pay a visit, long or short as you like, to M. Boulduc, a learned chemist? I am informed that he has made some experiments which tend to prove that fire does not augment the weight of bodies! The point is to have upon that subject a conversation with him. There is also a M. Grosse, who lives in the same building. He is also a chemist, very intelligent and very laborious. I pray you to ask both of these gentlemen what they think of the experiments of the lead calcined by ordinary fire, and of the metals calcined by the rays of the sun concentrated through the burning glass. They will feel it a pleasure to speak to you, to instruct you, and you will send me a statement of their philosophic instructions. This, my dear correspondent, is a commission much more amusing than to arrange a composition with the creditors of the Prince de Guise. That prince has always concealed from me the appointment of a commission for the liquidation of his debts. A life annuity ought to be sacred; he owes me three years' income. A commission established by the king is not established for the purpose of frustrating the creditors. Life annuities ought certainly to be excepted from the operation of the laws most favorable to debtors of dishonest intentions. Speak of this, I pray you, to M. de Machault; and after having represented to him my right and the injury which I suffer, you will act as he will direct. It is essential for us to avail ourselves of legal methods, and it is proper to do so with all the consideration possible. Do not trust the positive promise of the Prince de Guise. The positive promises of princes are trifles, and his are worse."

[June 30, 1737.] "Another little visit, my dear friend, to M. Geoffroy. Send him back, by means of some ounces of quinquina, or of senna, or of manna, or of anything else which you may be pleased to buy for your own health or for mine, — send him back, I tell you, to

[1] An allusion to Voltaire's poem, the Mondain, verse 22.

the chapter of lead and the regulus of antimony increased in weight by calcination. He has told you, and it is true, that those substances lose the increase of weight after becoming cold again; but that is not enough. It is necessary to know if that weight is lost when the calcined body becomes simply cold again, or if it is lost when the calcined body has been afterwards melted. Lémeri, who reports that twenty pounds of calcined lead weigh twenty-five pounds, adds that this lead remelted only weighs nineteen pounds. MM. Duclos and Homberg report that the regulus of iron and that of antimony calcined by the burning glass increased in weight; but that upon being melted afterwards by the same glass they lost both the weight which they had acquired and a little of their own. It is then not after having become cold that these bodies lose the weight added to their substance by the action of the fire. It would be necessary also to know if M. Geoffroy thinks that the igneous matter alone has caused this increase of weight; if the iron ladle with which they stirred during the operation, or if the vessel which contained the metal, did not increase the weight of that metal by transfusing into it some of its own substance. Ascertain, my dear friend, the opinion of the apothecary upon all these points, and send it to me quick. You are very capable of making this chemist talk, and all the chemists of the Academy, and of understanding them well. I count upon your friendship and discretion."

[July 6, 1737.] "It is a pleasure, my dear friend, to give you learned commissions, so well do you acquit yourself of them. No one could render service better or more promptly. I have just performed the experiment upon iron which the learned charcoal-burner, M. Grosse, advises. I weighed a piece of two pounds, which I made red-hot upon a tile in the open air. I weighed it red, I weighed it cold; it always weighed the same. I have been weighing every day lately iron and melted iron, flaming hot: I have weighed from two pounds to a thousand. So far from finding the weight of red-hot iron greater, I have found it much smaller, which I attribute to the furnace, prodigiously hot, which consumed some particles of iron. It is this which I pray you to communicate to M. Grosse when you see him; visit, then, promptly this gnome, and, with your usual precaution, consult him anew. He is a man well informed upon these subjects. Ascertain, then, 1st, if he believes that fire has weight; 2d, if the experiments made by M. Homberg and others ought to prevail over that of the iron red and iron cooled, which always weigh the same. We are surrounded, my dear abbé, with uncertainties of all possible kinds. The least truth gives us infinite pains to discover. 3d. Ask him if the burning glass of the Palais-Royal has the same effect upon matter exposed to the air as in the vacuum of the air-pump. Upon this poin

you must make him talk a long time. Ask him the effects of the rays of the sun in that vacuum upon gunpowder, upon iron, upon liquors, upon metals, and make a little note of all the answers of this learned man. 4th. Ask him if the phosphorus of Boyle, the burning phosphorus, takes fire in a vacuum. Finally, ask if he has seen any good Persian naphtha, and if it is true that this naphtha burns in water. There you are, my dear abbé, a finished natural philosopher. I pester you terribly, for I still add that I am in a hurry for this information. I abuse your complaisance excessively, but in atonement I love you excessively."

[August, 1737.] "Every day, my dear friend, brings you, then, new importunity from me. Tell me, will it not be abusing your patience to pray you to see M. Grosse again, and to have with that celebrated chemist a new scientific conversation? See him, then, and have the goodness to ask that learned charcoal-burner if he has ever performed the experiment of plunging his thermometer in spirits of wine, in spirits of nitre, to see if the mercury rises in those liquors. I am, my dear abbé, always ashamed of my importunities; but spare neither carriages nor messengers, and always transact the affairs of your friend entirely at your ease."

[October, 1737.] "Is M. de Brézé quite solid? What do you think of it, my prudent friend? This article of interest having been maturely examined, take twenty thousand francs from M. Michel and give them to M. Brézé, at ten per cent. This investment will be the more agreeable, as we shall be paid easily and regularly upon the proceeds of his houses in Paris. Arrange this affair for the best; and, once arranged, if the estate of Spoix can be bought for fifty thousand francs, we shall find the money towards the month of April. We shall sell some bonds. We shall borrow at five per cent., which will not be difficult either to you or to me. Life is short; Solomon tells us we must enjoy it; I think to enjoy, and for that reason I feel within me a grand vocation to be gardener, plowman, and vine-dresser. Perhaps even I shall succeed better in planting trees, in digging the earth, and in making it fruitful than in composing tragedies, experimenting in chemistry, writing epic poems, and other sublime follies which make implacable foes. Give 'L'Enfant Prodigue'[1] to Prault for fifty louis d'or, — six hundred francs down, and a note for the other six hundred francs, payable when this unhappy *Enfant* shall see the light. This money will be employed in some good work. I do not rebel against my destiny, which is to have a little glory and some hisses."

[November, 1737.] "Your patience, my dear abbé, is going to

[1] Comedy by Voltaire.

be put to a severe proof; I tremble lest you may be unable to sustain it. I hope everything from your friendship. Affairs temporal, affairs spiritual, these are the two great subjects of the long babble with which I am about to trouble you. M. de Lézeau owes me three years; it is necessary to press him without too much importunity. A letter to the Prince de Guise; that costs nothing, and advances matters. The Villars and the D'Auneuils owe two years; it is necessary politely and nicely to remonstrate with those gentlemen touching their duties to their creditors. It is necessary also to finish with M. de Richelieu, and to consent to what he wishes. I should have some great objections to make upon what he proposes; but I love better a conclusion than an objection. Conclude, then, my dear friend; I trust myself blindly to your discretion, which is always very useful to me. Prault ought to give fifty francs to monsieur your brother. I wish him to do so. It is a trifling *bonus*, a bagatelle, which is part of my bargain; and when that bagatelle shall be paid, monsieur your brother will scold for me the negligent Prault, who in the parcels of books which I order always makes delays that try my patience cruelly; nothing that he sends me arrives at the time appointed. Monsieur your brother will then inquire of that bookseller, or of any other that he wishes, for a Puffendorf; for the chemistry of Boerhaave, the most complete edition; for a 'Letter upon the Divisibility of Matter,' published by Jomvert; for the 'Index of the Thirty-First Volume of the History of the Academy of Sciences;' for Marriotte upon the 'Nature of the Air;' the same author upon 'Cold and Heat;' for Boyle 'De Ratione inter Ignem et Flammam,' difficult to find: that is the affair of monsieur your brother. Other commissions: two reams of foolscap, the same of letter paper, — the whole of Holland; twelve sticks of Spanish sealing-wax for spirits of wine; a Copernican sphere; a burning glass of the largest size; my engravings of the Luxembourg; two globes mounted; two thermometers; two barometers (the longest are the best); two scales, well graduated; some crucibles; some retorts. In making purchases, my friend, always prefer the handsome and excellent, if a little dear, to a common article less costly.

"So much for the literary man who seeks to instruct himself after the Fontenelles, the Boyles, the Boerhaaves, and other learned men. What follows is for the material man, who digests very ill; who has need to take, as they tell him, plenty of exercise; and who, beside this need, of necessity has also some other needs of society. I pray you, in consequence, to buy for him a good fowling-piece; a pretty game-bag with appurtenances; a gun-hammer; a draw-charge; large diamond shoe-buckles; other diamond garter-buckles; twenty

pounds of hair powder; ten pounds of smelling powder; a bottle of essence of jasmin; two enormous pots of orange pomatum; two powder puffs; a very good knife; three fine sponges; three dusters; four bundles of quills; two pairs of toilet pincers, very nice; a pair of very good pocket scissors; two floor brushes; finally, three pairs of slippers, well furred; and, besides — I remember nothing more. Of all these make a parcel; two, if necessary; three, even, if necessary: your packer is excellent. Send the whole by way of Joinville; not to my address, for I am in England (I beg you to remember that), but to the address of Madame de Champbonin. All that costs money, you will tell me; and where to get the money? Where you wish, my dear abbé. We have some bonds; we can convert them. We ought never to neglect anything for our pleasure, since life is short. I shall be entirely yours during that short life."

[December, 1737.] "Instead of money which Prault owes me, my dear abbé, I have ordered some books of him. You tell me he is dissatisfied; I am surprised at it; he ought to know that an author never deprives himself of the right of foreign editions. As soon as a book is printed at Paris with privilege, the publishers of Holland seize it, and the first who prints it has the exclusive privilege in that country; and to have this right of printing it first it suffices to announce the work in the gazettes. It is an established usage, which holds the place of law. Now, when I wish to favor a publisher in Holland, I advertise him of the work which I am printing in France, and I endeavor to let him have the first copy, in order that he may get beforehand with the trade. I have then promised a Holland publisher that I will immediately send him a copy of the work in question, and I have promised him this little favor to indemnify him for the delay in finishing the elements of the philosophy of Newton, which he began to print nearly a year ago. The point is to hurry on Prault, in order at the same time to hasten the little advantage which will indemnify the Holland publisher, for whom I have an affection, and who is a very honest man. M. Prault knows very well that this is the point. His privilege is for France, and not for Holland. He has never done business except upon this footing, and on condition that the work should be printed at Paris and at Amsterdam simultaneously. To prevent all difficulty, send him this note, and let him put in it his reply. These are the facts, and I ask your pardon for this verbiage. Prault still owes fifty francs to monsieur your brother; I wish him to pay them. This is a new bonus which I beg your brother to accept. I pray him also to send me the old tragedy of 'Cresphonte,' and all the old books which I have noted upon the catalogue which he sent me."

[Cambridge, December, 1737.] "I am very glad, my dear natural philosopher, that M. de Fontenelle has explained himself touching the propagation of fire. As the light of the sun is the most powerful fire which we know, it was natural to have some ideas a little clear upon that elementary fire. It was the affair of a philosopher; the rest is a blacksmith's business. I am in the midst of forges, and the subject suits me well enough. I hope that Bronod will explain himself as clearly respecting the fifty louis of which you speak as M. de Fontenelle upon light. If Bronod does not pay this money, I believe it will be necessary to sell a bond. I see no great harm in that; one never loses his dividend. It is true that the price varies towards the time of their payment, that is to say, every six months; but that amounts to little; and, besides, it is better to sacrifice some pistoles that give you the trouble of calling again upon M. Bronod. The three louis which you gave finally to M. Robert were doubtless for the advances he has made. I cannot imagine that a solicitor has taken it into his head to incur expense for me, since I have had no law business, unless I have had a suit without knowing it. M. Michel wishes, then, to keep my money until the first of March? Be it so. Let him have it; it will be always two months' interest gained. Let us not disdain such pickings. Make, I pray you, if you think it necessary, a little present to the steward of M. de Richelieu; but before doing so we must have good security for my arrears, and security that henceforth I receive regularly four thousand francs a year. A louis d'or to D'Arnaud, without telling him either where I am or what I am doing; neither him nor any one else. I am at Cirey for you alone, and in Cochin China for all the Parisians; or, which will be more probable, confined in some province of England."

[December, 1737.] "The picture of myself drawn in pastel, my dear abbé, is horrible and wretched, whatever the engraver thinks; little do I care. I shall not take the part of my countenance, which I do not know too well; but, my dear friend, can they not make me less ugly? I leave that to your care; especially, do not speak of it to Madame du Châtelet. Let us come to the affair of this lady. See, as soon as possible, Hébert, and recommend to him the greatest diligence. You have given him fifty louis; give him fifty more if he demands them, and assure him that at the instant of delivery the whole shall be exactly paid. If, in accordance with my last letter, you have sold a bond, you have done well; if you have not sold one, still you have done well. I approve you in everything, because all that you do is always well done, and you deserve that I thank you and that I embrace you heartily."

[July 12, 1740.] "I received your letter of the 9th, in which you

inform me of the *general* bankruptcy of the receiver-general named Michel. A sufficiently large portion of my property is involved (40,000 francs). The Lord gave, the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord. To suffer my ills in patience has been my lot for forty years; and one can submit to Providence without being a devotee. I confess that I did not expect this failure, and I do not understand how a receiver-general of the finances of his Most Christian Majesty, a very rich man, too, could fail so awkwardly, unless it is because he wished to be richer. In that case, M. Michel is doubly wrong. I could find it in my heart to cry, —

Michel, au nom de l'Eternel,
Met jadis le diable en déroute;
Mais après cette banqueroute,
Que le diable emporte Michel.[1]

"But this would be a poor jest, and I do not wish to make light either of M. Michel's losses or of my own. Nevertheless, my dear abbé, you will find the result to be that M. Michel's children will remain very rich, very well placed. . . . . Have the goodness to speak to Michel's cashier; endeavor to get from him how we should proceed so as not to lose all. . . . . Good-night; I embrace you with all my soul. Console yourself for the rout of Michel; your friendship consoles me for my loss."[2]

[December, 1737.] "You speak to me, my dear abbé, of a good-man chemist, and I hear you with pleasure. Then you propose that I should take him into my service; I ask nothing better. He will enjoy here complete liberty, be not ill lodged, be well nourished, have great convenience for cultivating at his ease his talent as a chemist; but it is indispensable that he should know how to say mass on Sundays and festivals in the chapel of the château. This mass is a condition without which I could not engage him. I will give him a hundred crowns [*écus*] a year, but I can do nothing more. He must also be informed that we take our meals very rarely with the Marquise du Châtelet, whose meal-times are not very regular; but there is a table for the Count du Châtelet, her son, and his tutor, a man of understanding, served regularly at noon and at eight in the evening. M. du Châtelet, the elder, often eats at that table, and occasionally we all sup together. Besides, we enjoy here perfect liberty. For the present we can only give him a chamber with an ante-chamber. If he accepts my propositions, he can come and bring all his apparatus with him. If he is in need of money you can advance him

[1] Michael, in the name of the Eternal, formerly put the devil to rout; but, after this bankruptcy, may the devil fly away with Michael!

[2] Lettres de Voltaire à l'Abbé Moussinot, page 213.

a quarter, on condition that he starts at once. If he delays his departure, do not delay, my dear treasurer, to send me some money by the coach. Instead of two hundred and fifty louis, send boldly three hundred of them, with the books and the bagatelles I have asked for. For the rest, my dear friend, I take it for granted that your chemist is a man of sense, since you propose him. Tell me his name, for, really, I must know how he calls himself. If he makes Fahrenheit thermometers, he will make some here, and render service to natural philosophy. Are those thermometers of the same scale as Réaumur's? These instruments do not accord unless they sound the same octave."

[May, 1738.] "I would like, my dear abbé, a pretty little watch, good or bad, simple, of silver merely, with a cord of silk and gold. Three louis ought to pay for that. You will send it to me *subito*,[1] *subito*, by the coach. It is a little present which I wish to make to the son of M. the Marquis du Châtelet, a child ten years old. He will break it, but he wishes one, and I am afraid of being anticipated. I embrace you."

[June, 1738.] "The watch was just the thing. It was received with transport, and I thank you, my dear abbé, for taking so much pains."

[1] Quickly.

CHAPTER XXX.

LITERARY WORK AT CIREY.

And now for the realization of the dream of peaceful, glorious toil, far from the distractions of the world, solaced every hour by love.

His first labors at Cirey, which were begun and continued amid crowds of workmen and heaps of litter, were of an abstract and thoughtful nature, inspired by Pope's "Essay on Man," then in the splendor of its first celebrity. Voltaire had received the early cantos in 1732, in time to insert a passage concerning them in his English Letters, and in 1734 came the completed work, in a quarto volume, with dedication to Lord Bolingbroke. It so moved and roused him that, while he had a princely wedding on his hands and a new love in his heart, while a *lettre de cachet* was on his track, while he was finishing a tragedy and writing a comedy, while he was restoring and furnishing a château, while he was in hiding at Brussels, his graver thoughts revolved the mighty themes touched in Pope's Essay. His seven "Discourses on Man," in verse, and his "Treatise on Metaphysics," in prose, contain the substance of those thoughts. Three of the Discourses were written in 1734, and the others in the three years following, as mood and opportunity favored.

The first of the Discourses turns upon the equality of human conditions: "Mortals are equal; their mask differs;" wealth has its drawbacks, and poverty its compensations. The second, upon Liberty, maintains that man makes or mars his own happiness. "Love truth, but pardon error. The mortal who goes astray is still a man and thy brother. Be wise for thyself alone, compassionate for him. Achieve thine own welfare by blessing others." The third Discourse declares that the chief obstacle to human happiness is envy. "Take revenge upon a rival by surpassing him." The fourth inculcates

the truth that excess is fatal to enjoyment, and moderation one of the inflexible conditions of happiness. "To desire all is the mark of a fool; excess is his portion. Moderation is the treasure of the wise; he knows how to control his tastes, his labors, his pleasures." "Work is often the father of pleasure; I pity the man overwhelmed with the weight of his own leisure. Happiness is a good that nature sells us." The fifth Discourse is upon the Nature of Pleasure, and shows that pleasure is the lure that God uses to make us execute his purposes, and is therefore not to be placed under the ban of religion. "Calvin, — that fool, sombre and severe." "It is necessary to be a man before being a Christian." "Without the attraction of pleasure, who would submit to the laws of Hymen?" The sixth Discourse, upon the Nature of Man, is a confession that man knows very little of his nature, but must make the best of it, and bear in mind that perfect felicity can never be the lot of mortal. "One day some mice said to one another, 'How charming is this world! What an empire is ours! This palace so superb was built for us; from all eternity God made for us these large holes. Do you see those fat hams under that dim ceiling? They were created there for us by Nature's hands; those mountains of lard, eternal aliment, will be ours to the end of time. Yes, we are, great God, if our sages tell us the truth, the masterpiece, the end, the aim, of all thy works. Cats are dangerous and prompt to devour, but it is to instruct and correct us.'" The seventh and last of these Discourses is upon True Virtue. "The miracles are good; but to relieve a brother, to draw a friend from the depths of misery, to pardon the virtues of our enemies, — these are greater miracles." "The true virtue, then, is 'beneficence;' a new word in the French language, but the whole universe ought to cherish the idea."

The seven poems — fluent, light, witty, brief, often wise and salutary — are surcharged with the Voltairean essence; not anti-Christian, but anti-Pascal. They are such as Horace might have written if he had had seventeen Christian centuries behind him, instead of before him. Their airy lightness and grace made them universally read, and they will doubtless retain their power when Voltaire and Pascal at last meet in a religion that will include and honor both.

A line of the Discourse upon the Nature of Man gives us one of Voltaire's maxims of the art of writing: "The secret of wearying your reader is to tell him all."

During the first years of his residence at the château, the reading of one of these Discourses was frequently part of the evening entertainment provided for a guest, followed, perhaps, by a new canto of the "Pucelle;" and nothing is more certain than that, in polite circles, the two readings were considered equally legitimate and proper. Such were the château manners of the time.

A graver and longer work, in prose, the "Treatise upon Metaphysics," was also written amid the confusion of settling at Cirey. This Treatise is a simple and clear statement of the author's convictions concerning man, God, immortality, the freedom of the will, the nature of the soul, man's duty, and the sources of his welfare. When Madame de Rupelmonde, many years before, asked him what she ought to think on such subjects, he replied by a sprightly deistical poem. Probably the Marquise du Châtelet had asked him a similar question, and this seventy-five-page pamphlet was such a reply as he would have made to a lady fond of mathematics and accustomed to read Locke. There is only one dull or repellent word in the piece, and that is its title, which has doubtless kept many persons from looking farther. In his own chatty, irresistible manner, he draws the idlest reader on, while he gives his reasons for thinking that men cannot be descended from a single pair, and must have been created by a God. *The watch proves the watchmaker* was his constant argument for the existence of God, at every period of his life, and he developed it in this Treatise some years before Paley was born. While admitting God, he denies providence. The universe is governed by laws which nothing can change, — laws as invariable as those of mathematics. Revelation, other than that of science, he rejects with his usual gayety and scorn, — a revelation that "tells the Jews how they shall go to the *garde-robe*, but is silent upon the soul and immortality!" "I do not assert," he says, "that I have demonstrations against the spirituality and immortality of the soul; but all the probabilities are against those doctrines." In treating of the nature of virtue, he lays down this simple proposition: Virtue is conduct which benefits the community; vice is conduct which injures the community.

Lying, for example, is generally a vice, because it is of the greatest importance that men should be able to believe and trust one another. "But how often does lying become an heroic virtue?" To shrink from a lie when it would save a friend from deadly peril would be, he says, shameful dereliction. As to religion, he plainly reveals his conviction that, as then established in Europe, it was a system of spoliation and oppression, the despot's main support and defense. Every desolater of the earth began his work of massacre and ruin by solemn acts of religion, and, while the ground still smoked with carnage, hastened to the temple to repeat those solemn acts. Nor was religion necessary as an ally of virtue, since men conspicuous for unbelief, like Bayle, Locke, Spinoza, Shaftesbury, Collins, and others, were men of rigid virtue. "Much to be pitied are they who need the help of religion to be honest men."

Such was the famous "Treatise upon Metaphysics." Its chief merit was its tone of candor, moderation, and modesty. He stated, and evidently felt, the difficulties attending every solution of the vast enigma, and how inadequate were the faculties of man to penetrate the mysteries of life, growth, and death. He wrote it in 1734, when science was not yet groping toward the central secret, and when few men could offer a conjectural, or state an hereditary, solution without some mixture of passion or bias fatal to the development of truth. He uttered his real thoughts. He wrote without cant, without arrogance, without passion, and without fear.

It is interesting to notice how he returned in this work to the point where the Roman poet, Lucretius, left off, about the year 50 B. C. As Lucretius surveyed the Roman Empire and interpreted human life in it, so did Voltaire survey and interpret the Roman Catholic empire, of which he was a part. Lucretius spoke of "the life of man lying abject and foully groveling, crushed beneath the weight of a Religion that lowered over mortals with terrible aspect, until Epicurus rose to make a stand against her." "Him neither tales of gods, nor thunder-bolts, nor heaven itself with its threatening roar, repressed, but roused all the more the active energy of his soul, so that he should desire to be the first to break the close bars of nature's portals." [1]

[1] Lucretius on the Nature of Things. Rome, about 50 B. C. Bohn's edition. London, 1872. Book I., page 6.

Voltaire's Treatise could not, of course, be published just then. The manuscript lay among his papers at this period, with other perilous material, to keep Madame du Châtelet in alarm. We are too familiar with such opinions now to be able to feel how frightfully explosive the little book was. We have learned, and Europe is learning, that the most prodigious bombshell can explode harmlessly out-of-doors, with red flags duly placed. We have learned that publicity, like the winds of heaven, is a perfect disinfectant, as well as a good seed-sower. But in 1735 there was terror in a manuscript like this, as in a loaded shell on a centre-table, or a bottle of phosphorus in a medicine chest.

While occupied thus with works and thoughts traceable in some degree to his residence in England, he was delighted to learn that his hospitable friend Falkener, now Sir Everard Falkener, had been appointed English ambassador to Constantinople. He wrote to congratulate him, using such English as he had left after seven years of disuse: —

[September 18, 1735.] "My dear Friend! Your new title will change neither my sentiments, nor my expressions. My dear Falkener! friendship is full of talk, but it must be discreet. In the hurry of business you are in, remember only I talk'd to you, about seven years ago, of that very same ambassy. Remember I am the first man who did foretell the honour you enjoy. Believe then no man is more pleased with it than I am. I have my share in your happiness. If you pass through France in your way to Constantinople, I advise you I am but twenty leagues from Calais, almost in the road to Paris. The castle is called Cirey, four miles from Vassy en Champagne on Saint-Dizier's road, and eight miles from Saint-Dizier. The post goes thither. There lives a young lady called the marquise Du Châtelet, whom I have taught english to, and who longs to see you. You will lie here, if you remember your friend." [1]

The ambassador went to Constantinople by sea, and so missed the delights of Cirey. Soon after he was settled at Constantinople, Voltaire wrote to him again, and in better English: —

[February 22, 1736.] "Now the honest, the good and plain philosopher of Wandsworth, represents his king and country, and is equal

[1] 1 Lettres Inédites de Voltaire, 75 and 84.

to the Grand-Seignior. Certainly England is the only country where commerce and virtue are to be rewarded with such an honour. If any grief [concern] rests still upon my mind, my dear friend (for friend you are, tho' a minister), it is that I am unable to be a witness of your new sort of glory and felicity. Had I not regulated my life after a way which makes me a kind of *solitaire*, I would fly to that nation of savage slaves, whom I hate, to see the man I love. What would my entertainment be! and how full the overflowings of my heart, in contemplating my dear Falkener, amidst so many Infidels of all hues, smiling with his humane philosophy at the superstitious follies that reign on the one side at Stamboul, and on the other at Galata! I would not admire, as mylady Mary Worthley Montagu says,

> The vizir proud, distinguished from the rest;
> Six slaves in gay attire, his bridle hold,
> His bridle rich with gems, his stirrups gold!

"For, how the devil! should I admire a slave upon a horse? My friend Falkener I should admire!

"But I must bid adieu! to the great town of Constantin, and stay in my little corner of the world, in that very same castle where you were invited to come in your way to Paris, in case you should have taken the road of Calais to Marseille. Your taking an other way, was certainly a sad disappointment for me, and especially to that lady who makes use of your Locke and of more of your other books. Upon my word! a French lady who reads Newton, Locke, Addison, and Pope, and who retires from the bubbles and the stunning noise of Paris, to cultivate in the country the great and amiable genius she is born with, is more valuable than your Constantinople and all the Turkish empire!

"You may confidently write to me, by the way of Marseille, *chez madame la marquise Du Châtelet, à Cirey, en Champagne.* Be sure I shall not stir from that spot of ground, before the favour of your letter comes to me. . . . . What I long to be informed of is, whether you are as happy as you seem to be. Have you got a little private *seraglio?* or, are you to be married? Are you over-stoked with business? Does your indolence or laziness comply with your affairs? Do you drink much of that good Cyprus wine? For my part, I am here too happy, though my health is ever very weak:

> Excepto quod non simul esses, cætera lætus.

"Addio! mio carissimo ambasciadore! Addio! le baccio umilmente le mani! L'amo, e la reversico!"[1]

[1] Adieu, my dearest ambassador; adieu, I kiss very humbly the hands of your lordship. I love and honor you.

He continued to correspond with the ambassador, always in the same tone.

Another dramatic success, and one of great splendor, fell to his lot in January, 1736, while he was absent from the scene. "Alzire, or the Americans," was the name of the new tragedy, the scene of which was laid in that land so exceedingly remote then from the knowledge of Europeans, — Peru. The attention of Europe had been just drawn to that country by the expedition sent thither by the French Academy of Sciences to measure an arc of the meridian, with a view to ascertain the precise form of the earth. Voltaire's old friend, Condamine, was one of the party. "Alzire," moreover, was similar to "Zaïre" in contrasting two civilizations and two religions, and in affording opportunity for striking costume and barbaric magnificence. During the turbulent period, when the poet was battling with ministers at Paris and masons at Cirey, Thieriot, as it seems, talked of the new play in an exulting strain, in the hearing of Le Franc, a young author, who had recently made a dramatic success of much promise with his tragedy of "Didon." Le Franc at once wrote a Peruvian tragedy, and read it to the actors, who accepted it with joy. Voltaire was not the person to allow poaching on any manor of his. He wrote a witheringly polite, ingenious letter to the comedians, stating his case, and modestly claiming to have his play, such as it was, produced first, since he had originated the subject, and since no play of *his* could have the least chance of success if performed after that of M. Le Franc, who was in all the vigor and brilliancy of youth.

M. Le Franc was obliged to stand aside and wait. "Alzire" was performed January 27, 1736, with perfect success, the first of a long line of Peruvian plays. For twenty successive nights — a great run then — it was repeated to houses averaging 2682 francs; it was performed twice at court; it remained a popular piece during the rest of the century, and, indeed, until the later development of the French drama rendered that mode of dramatic presentation obsolete. It need not be said that this play teemed with the Voltairean message from end to end. That message was repeated in notes, in prefaces, and in the elaborate dedication to Madame du Châtelet. "The religion of a barbarian," says the Discourse

Preliminary, "consists in offering to his gods the blood of his enemies. An ill-instructed Christian is often little more reasonable. To be faithful to some useless observances, and unfaithful to the true duties of man; to offer certain prayers, and retain his vices; to fast, but hate; to cabal, to persecute, — such is his religion. That of the true Christian is to regard all men as his brothers; to do them good, and pardon their ill-doing."

It is noticeable that, in his public dedication of the work, he makes no secret that it was written in Madame du Châtelet's house, and that he hopes to live there, "near her, for the rest of his life," in the cultivation of literature and the search for truth, "to which she has sacrificed in her youth the false but enchanting pleasures of the world."

"Alzire" was still fresh in the recollection of play-goers when an event occurred at the Théâtre-Français that kept all the cafés talking for a week, and has made a good café and green-room tradition ever since. It was the 10th of October, 1736. The play advertised for that evening was Racine's "Britannicus." The audience was assembled, and the time for beginning had come. A member of the company appeared before the curtain, and addressed the audience. An actress, he said, who was cast in a leading part of "Britannicus" had become suddenly indisposed, and the play could not be presented. But, most fortunately, a new five-act comedy, in verse, by an anonymous author, was in readiness, though not yet announced; and, if the audience pleased, it would be given instead of the tragedy. The comedy was called "The Prodigal Son" (L'Enfant Prodigue). What audience could object to such unexpected good fortune? The piece was played. It was received with the warmest applause, announced for repetition, continued to be given, with an interruption, for thirty nights, and thus thrust upon the cafés of Paris an agitating problem. Who could have written it? Not Piron, surely. Perhaps Destouches. Probably Gresset. Gresset, no doubt, was the rumor for some days. Voltaire? Out of the question!

The astute reader knows, of course, that the author was managing this comedy within a comedy from the castle of Cirey, in "St. Dizier's road," in Champagne. When that

author was showing himself in Paris, in the spring of 1735, he supped one evening with Mademoiselle Quinault, a leading actress of the Théâtre-Français. She chanced to mention that she had seen lately a dramatic sketch at a Fair theatre, which, coarse and crude as it was, had in it the germ of a good comedy, and that she was going to suggest it as a subject to Destouches. She gave an account of the plot: Two sons: one of them merry and wild, but noble, the other a steady-going, miserly dastard; both attracted to the same lovely girl, one by true love, the other by her large dowry; at the end, the true lover winning the prize. Voltaire listened in silence, thinking, perhaps, that he knew two such brothers in Paris. The next morning, early, he was at Mademoiselle Quinault's door. "Have you spoken to Destouches of 'The Prodigal Son'?" She had not. He drew from his pocket the plan of a comedy upon the subject, which she approved, and urged him to complete. Mindful, it may be, of his Peruvian adventure, he imposed absolute secrecy as to the authorship, and afterwards devised the little scheme of substituting the comedy for the tragedy.

We see by his letters of this time that he was more intent upon the success of his scheme of concealment than he was upon the success of the play. Two passages from these letters have been frequently quoted against him, and they are in truth characteristic, and could not be fairly omitted. To one intimate friend, M. Berger, who was in the secret, he wrote thus: "You can assure MM. La Roque and Prèvost [editors] that I am not the author of the play. Get them to publish a statement to this effect in their periodicals, in case it should be necessary. . . . . If by chance the secret of 'The Prodigal Son' escapes, swear always that I am not the author. To lie for a friend is friendship's first duty." Three days after he wrote thus to Thieriot: "Lying is a vice only when it does harm; it is a very great virtue when it does good. Be, then, more virtuous than ever. It is necessary to lie like a devil; not timidly, not for a time, but boldly and always. What does it matter that this censorious public should know whom to punish for having put upon the stage a Croupillac? Let it hiss her if she has no merit, but let the author remain unknown, I conjure you, in the

name of the tender friendship which has united us for twenty years." This we might accept, if he had only laid down an infallible rule, adapted to average human capacity, for distinguishing between lies that do good and lies that do harm.

These plays, these poems, these treatises upon the problems of life and destiny, were not all the literary work done by him in these years. His favorite scheme was still the history of the reign of Louis XIV., which he meant to write on a system unattempted yet in prose or verse: that of dwelling upon things of real and lasting importance, and passing as lightly as possible over wars, quarrels, controversies, and conquests. His letters on this subject show him in a different light from that cast by those just quoted. Here he is the faithful servant of truth. To the same Thieriot, as to many others, he writes thus on the plan and spirit of this long-projected work: —

"When I asked you for anecdotes upon the age of Louis XIV., it was less upon the king himself than the arts which flourished in his reign. I should prefer details relating to Racine and Boileau, to Quinault, Sully, Molière, Lebrun, Bossuet, Poussin, Descartes, and others, than to the battle of Steinkerque. Nothing but a name remains of those who commanded battalions and fleets; nothing results to the human race from a hundred battles gained; but the great men of whom I have spoken prepared pure and durable delights for generations unborn. A canal that connects two seas, a picture by Poussin, a beautiful tragedy, a discovered truth, are things a thousand times more precious than all the annals of the court, than all the narratives of war. You know that with me great men rank first; heroes last. *I call great men all those who have excelled in the useful or the agreeable.* The ravagers of provinces are mere heroes."

The true Voltaire speaks in these lines; it was *so* that he felt all the days of his life.

Two of the forty arm-chairs of the French Academy fell vacant this year. The author of "Alzire" was not thought of as a candidate for either of them. He did not even regard himself as an available candidate; and the reason was plain enough to the literary cafés of the capital. The same cafés soon knew why the author of "The Prodigal Son" had sc

sedulously concealed himself; or, as Madame du Châtelet expressed it, why that Prodigal was an orphan. In March, 1736, he received a letter from Jore, bookseller of Rouen, bastilled and ruined by the English Letters, telling him that the ministry was disposed to relent toward him and restore his license, provided he would state the whole truth respecting that publication. He asked for particulars, which Voltaire gave with simplicity and truth; going over the whole history of the work, from Thieriot's taking it to England to the pirated Paris edition, published during the author's absence, which caused the arrest and ruin of Jore and his own flight from France. This letter, in which he frankly owned himself the author of the book, placed him in the power of Jore, who answered it by demanding to be paid the cost of the confiscated edition, fourteen hundred francs. The author, indignant, but alarmed, hastened to Paris, saw the bookseller, and denied the justice of his claim, but offered half the sum demanded. Jore refused; brought suit; threw himself into the arms of Desfontaines, editor of a literary journal hostile to Voltaire; and published a *factum*, probably written by Desfontaines, in which he gave a history of his connection with the poet, related with highly effective perversity. The scandal was immense. Injudicious friends advised compromise at any cost; and, finally, the lieutenant of police, with the approval of the ministry, decided the matter thus: Jore's claim not allowed; Voltaire to give him five hundred francs as charity (*aumônes*). "It is to sign my shame," said Voltaire; "I would rather go on with the suit than pay." But he signed and paid, nevertheless. A year or two after, Jore confessed that he had been used and misled by others; he made profuse apologies, and drew a small pension from Voltaire as long as he lived. "The malice of your enemies," said he, "has only served to make me know the goodness of your character." [1]

The effect upon the public of this scandalous affair was exceedingly bad. The author labored under peculiar disadvantages, since he had formally disavowed the work, and the decree against him of the parliament of Paris was still in force. He held his freedom on sufferance. He was in a corner where effective battle was impossible, and a thought-

[1] Jore to Voltaire, December 20, 1738. 1 Œuvres, 262.

less public, imperfectly informed, saw nothing in the matter except a paltry squabble between a very rich and a very poor man about a sum of money, of no importance to the one, and of great importance to the other. The history of this single case suffices to refute the light passage upon lying given above. It is not in mortal ken to discern what falsehood is harmless and what falsehood is destructive.

After wasting ten weeks in Paris upon this sorry business, he returned, in July, 1736, to Cirey, not in the best spirits, and well aware that it would be unwise in him to give his "Prodigal Son" a father of so dubious a reputation as his own. He saw the two chairs of the Academy assigned to his inferiors, and he was all too conscious that the Rousseaus and the Desfontaines, the Jansenists and the bigots of his world, did not repine at the national slight put upon him.

CHAPTER XXXI.

FREDERIC, PRINCE ROYAL OF PRUSSIA.

Consolation brief but keenly felt awaited him at Cirey. In August, 1736, soon after his return from Paris, a long letter reached the château, addressed to himself, and signed, Frederic, Prince Royal of Prussia. A year or two before, when he was settling at Cirey, he had received from the Duke of Holstein, heir presumptive of the throne of Russia, husband of Catherine II., an invitation to reside at the Russian capital upon a revenue of ten thousand francs a year. He had just then come under the spell of Madame du Châtelet. "Persecuted as I was," he wrote to Thieriot, "I would not have left Cirey for the throne of Russia itself." He politely declined the offer; hoping, as he said, that "the Keeper of the Seals would less persecute a man who refused such establishments in foreign countries." Doubtless, he found means to convey both the information and the hint to that minister.

The letter of Frederic was the warm outpouring of a young and generous heart toward the poet who had given it its noblest pleasures, toward the instructor who had nourished its best aspirations. The prince, then twenty-four, had lived through his storm and stress period. The miseries and shames brought upon his sister and himself by the collision between their willful, obstinate mother and their father's arbitrary disposition, predisposed to frenzy by alcohol and tobacco, were at an end. The Prince Royal was then a married man, living in peace and dignity at a spacious and suitable house in the country, where he exercised his regiment, played the flute, worked his air-pump, read Voltaire, and tried — how hard he tried! — to write such French verses as Voltaire wrote. He was in the habit of sending letters to the French authors, to whom he had owed much of the alleviation of his hard lot; and now he wrote to Voltaire, to whom he felt that he owed

most. Here is the first of his letters, entire, — the first of a correspondence that includes about five hundred letters, and lasted, with occasional interruptions, for forty-two years, even to the last weeks of Voltaire's life : —

[August 8, 1736.] "Monsieur, although I have not the satisfaction of knowing you personally, you are not the less known to me by your works. They are treasures of the mind, if one may so express himself, composed of pieces wrought with so much taste, delicacy, and art that their beauties appear new every time they are read. I believe I have discerned in them the character of their gifted author, who does honor to our age and to the human intellect. Great moderns will one day owe it to you, and to you alone, in case the dispute whether the preference is due to them or the ancients is ever renewed, that the balance will incline to their side.

"You add to the quality of excellent poet an infinitude of other kinds of knowledge, which, in truth, have some affinity with poetry, but which have not been treated poetically, except by your pen. Never did poet before set to music metaphysical thoughts ; the honor of having done so first was reserved for you. It is the taste you show in your writings for philosophy that induces me to send you the translation I have made of the indictment and defense of J. M. Wolf, the most celebrated philosopher of our day, who, for having carried the light into the darkest places of metaphysics, and for having treated those difficult matters in a style as lofty as it is precise and clear, is cruelly accused of irreligion and atheism. Such is the destiny of great men ; their superior genius always exposes them to the envenomed darts of calumny and envy.

"I am at present having translated the 'Treatise upon God, the Soul, and the World,' from the same author. I shall send the work to you, monsieur, as soon as it is finished ; and I am sure that the force of the reasoning will strike you in all his propositions, which follow one another geometrically, and are joined like the links of a chain.

"The kindness and support you bestow upon all who devote themselves to the arts and sciences make me hope that you will not exclude me from the number of those whom you find worthy of your instruction ; for thus I name your correspondence, which cannot but be profitable to every thinking being. I dare even to go so far as to say, without derogating from the merits of others, that in the entire universe there are no individuals of whom you could not be the instructor. Without lavishing upon you incense unworthy to be offered you, I can say that I find beauties without number in your works.

Your 'Henriade' charms me, and triumphs happily over the ill-judged criticism which has been made upon it. The tragedy of 'Cæsar' exhibits to us characters well sustained; the sentiments of the play are all magnificent and grand; and we feel that Brutus is either Roman or English. 'Alzire' adds to the charm of novelty a happy contrast between the manners of savages and Europeans. You show by the character of Gusman that Christianity, ill understood and guided by false zeal, renders men more barbarous and more cruel than paganism itself.

"Corneille, the great Corneille, he who drew to himself the admiration of his whole period, if he were to return to life in our days, would see with astonishment, and perhaps with envy, that the tragic Muse lavishes upon you the favors of which she was miserly towards him. What may we not expect from the author of so many masterpieces! What new marvels may not come from the pen which once delineated, with so much spirit and elegance, the 'Temple of Taste'!

"This it is which makes me desire so ardently to possess all your works. I pray you, monsieur, to send them to me, and to communicate them without reserve. If among your manuscripts there is one which, from necessary prudence, you deem it best to conceal from the eyes of the public, I promise to keep it inviolably secret, and to be content with applauding it myself. I know, unhappily, that the faith of princes is a thing little respectable in our time; but I hope, nevertheless, that you will not allow yourself to be possessed by a general prejudice, and that you will make an exception in my favor.

"I shall believe myself richer in having your works than in the possession of all the transient and contemptible gifts of fortune, which the same chance gives and takes away. One can render your works his own by the aid of memory, and they will last as long as memory itself. Knowing the imperfection of mine, I hesitate long before making choice of the things which I judge worthy to place in it.

"If poetry were still upon its old footing, — that is to say, if poets knew only how to trill tedious idyls, eclogues cast in the same moulds, insipid stanzas, or, at their highest flight, to chant an elegy, I should renounce it forever; but you ennoble that art; you show us new paths and routes unknown to the Lefrancs and the Rousseaus.

"Your poems have qualities which render them respectable, and worthy the admiration and study of honest people. They form a course of morals wherein one can learn to think and to act. Virtue is painted therein in the most beautiful colors. The idea of true glory is clearly defined in them; and you insinuate a taste for the sciences in a manner so fine and so delicate that whoever has read

your works cherishes the ambition to follow your footsteps. How many times have I not said to myself, 'Unhappy man, lay down a burden the weight of which is beyond your strength; no one can imitate Voltaire unless it be Voltaire himself'!

"At such moments I have felt that the advantages of birth, and the halo of grandeur so flattering to our vanity, are things of very small account, or, in truth, of no account at all. They are distinctions foreign to ourselves, which adorn only the exterior. How far preferable to them are mental gifts! What do we not owe to persons whom Nature herself has distinguished by merely making them what they are! She pleases herself in forming some men whom she endows with all the capacity necessary for carrying forward the arts and sciences; and it is for princes to recompense their toils. Ah, would that it might fall to my lot to crown your triumphs with the glory they merit! I should only fear that this country, not fertile in laurel, would not furnish as much as your works deserve.

"If my destiny does not favor me so far as to enable me to possess you, I can at least hope some day to see one whom I have admired so long and from so great a distance, and to assure you with the living voice that I am, with all the esteem and the consideration due to those who, following the torch of truth, consecrate their labors to the public weal, monsieur, your affectionate friend,

"FREDERIC, PRINCE ROYAL OF PRUSSIA."

The arrival of this letter was well timed to enhance its effect. Eulogium of this kind had been familiar to him from his youth, and even eulogium from princes; but this prince was about to reign! He was to reign over a country in close proximity to France, and no Keeper of the Seals could choose to disregard him. His "ogre of a father," as Madame du Châtelet was pleased to style the Prussian king, was not a "good life," with his deep drinking, his tobacco parliament, and his explosions of drunken fury. The time was obviously not distant when the guard of four thousand giants would be disbanded, and a prince ascend the throne who would at once begin a millennium in Prussia that might spread over Europe. So thought Voltaire, in the enthusiasm of the hour. What princes he had seen in his own country! How insensible to the true glory of rulers! A regent of France had shut him up in the Bastille for eleven months upon a groundless charge; a Duke of Bourbon had seen him imprisoned and exiled for a happy and just repartee; the present king had not recognized

his existence, and allowed his best works to be put under ban. At the very moment when this letter was placed in his hands he was not, as we shall see in a moment, safe in his bed, and he owed his late impunity, not to any merit of his own, but, as a minister had recently said, "to the respect felt by the administration for "the family that gave him an *asylum*." Voltaire replied thus to the Prince Royal: —

[August 26, 1736.] "Monseigneur, I should be wanting in sensibility not to be infinitely touched by the letter with which your Royal Highness has deigned to honor me. My self-love was too much flattered by it; but my love for the human race, which I have always had at heart, and which I venture to say makes my character, gave me a pleasure a thousand times purer when I discovered that there is in the world a prince who thinks like a man, a prince philosopher, who will render men happy.

"Permit me to say to you that there is not a man on earth who does not owe you grateful homage for the care you take to cultivate by sound philosophy a soul born to command. Be sure that there have been no truly good kings except those who have begun, like you, by instructing themselves, by knowing men, by loving the truth, by detesting persecution and superstition. There is no prince who, being thus formed, could not bring back the age of gold to his states. Why do so few kings seek this advantage? You know, Monseigneur: it is because almost all of them think more of royalty than of humanity. You do precisely the contrary. Rely upon it, if one day the tumult of business and the wickedness of men do not alter so divine a character, you will be adored by your people and beloved by the whole world. Philosophers worthy of the name will fly to your dominions; and, as celebrated artisans go in crowds to the country where their art is most esteemed, men who think will go to gather about your throne.

"The illustrious Queen Christina left her kingdom to go in quest of the arts; reign, Monseigneur, and the arts will go in quest of you.

"May you never be disgusted with the sciences by the quarrels of the learned! You see, Monseigneur, by the very things you deign to send me, that they are men, for the most part, like courtiers themselves. They are sometimes as selfish, as intriguing, as false, as cruel; and all the difference between the pests of the court and the pests of the schools is that the latter are the more ridiculous.

"It is very sad for humanity that those who claim to declare the commands of Heaven, to be the interpreters of the Divinity, — in one word, the theologians, — are sometimes the most dangerous of all; that

there should be some among them who are as pernicious to society as they are obscure in their ideas; and that their souls should be swollen with bitterness and pride in proportion as they are empty of truth. They would be willing to disturb the peace of the earth for a sophism, and would interest all kings to avenge by sword and fire the honor of an argument *in ferio* or *in barbara*.

"Every thinking being who is not of their opinion is an atheist; and every king who does not favor them will be damned. You know, Monseigneur, that the best course one can take is to abandon to themselves those pretended preceptors and real enemies of the human race. Their words, when they are disregarded, are lost in the air like the wind; but if the weight of authority is enlisted in their support, that wind acquires a force which sometimes overturns the throne.

"I see, Monseigneur, with the natural joy of a heart filled with love for the public good, the immense distance which you put between men who peacefully seek the truth and those who wish to go to war for words which they do not understand. I see that the Newtons, the Leibnitz, the Bayles, the Lockes, souls so elevated, so enlightened, and so gentle, are those who nourish your spirit, and that you reject other sham aliment which you find poisoned or without substance.

"I do not know how to thank your Royal Highness enough for your goodness in sending me the little book concerning M. Wolf. I regard his metaphysical ideas as doing honor to the human intellect. They are flashes in the midst of profound night, which, I believe, is all we can hope from metaphysics. There is no appearance that the first principles of things will ever be well understood. The mice which inhabit some little holes of an immense building know not if that building is eternal, nor who was its architect, nor why that architect built. They try to preserve their lives, to people their holes, and to escape the destructive animals that pursue them. We are mice, and the divine architect who has built this universe has not yet, as far as I know, told his secret to any of us. If any one might pretend to divine the truth, it is M. Wolf. He may be combated, but he must be esteemed. His philosophy is very far from being pernicious; there is nothing in it more beautiful or more true than his remark that men ought to be just, though even they should have the misfortune to be atheists.

"The protection which, it seems, you give, Monseigneur, to that learned man is a proof at once of your justice and your humanity.

"You have the goodness, Monseigneur, to promise to send me the 'Treatise upon God, the Soul, and the World.' What a present, Monseigneur, and what a transaction! The heir of a monarchy deigns, from the recesses of his palace, to send instruction to a hermit!

Deign to make me this present, Monseigneur; my extreme love for the truth is the only thing which renders me worthy of it. Most princes dread to hear the truth, and you will teach it.

"With regard to the verses of which you speak to me, you think upon that art as sensibly as upon all the rest. Verses which do not teach men new and affecting truths little deserve to be read. You feel that there would be nothing more contemptible than to pass one's life in putting into rhyme stale commonplaces which do not merit the name of thoughts. If there is anything lower than that, it is to be nothing but a satirical poet, and write only to decry others. Such poets are to Parnassus what those doctors are to the schools who are acquainted only with words, and cabal against men who write things.

"If the 'Henriade' has not displeased your Royal Highness, I ought to thank for it the love of truth my poem inspires, and the horror for the factious, for persecutors, for the superstitious, for tyrants, and for rebels. It is the work of an honest man; it ought to find favor with a prince philosopher.

"You order me to send you my other works. I shall obey you, Monseigneur; you shall be my judge, and you shall stand to me in lieu of the public. I shall submit to you what I have hazarded in philosophy; your luminous comments will be my recompense; it is a reward that few sovereigns can give. I am sure of your secrecy; your virtue, I do not doubt, equals your knowledge.

"I should regard it as a very great good fortune to be able to pay my court to your Royal Highness. We go to Rome to see churches, pictures, ruins, and bas-reliefs. A prince like you deserves a journey much better; it is a rarity more marvelous. But friendship, which retains me in the retreat where I am, does not permit me to leave it. You think, without doubt, like Julian, that great man so calumniated, who said that friends ought always to be preferred to kings.

"In whatever corner of the world I finish my life, be sure, Monseigneur, that I shall continue to make vows for you; that is to say, for the happiness of a whole people. My heart will be ranked among your subjects; your glory always will be dear to me. My wish will be that you may always resemble yourself, and that the other kings may resemble you. I am, with profound respect, of your Royal Highness, the very humble VOLTAIRE."

The prince replied with a promptitude and at a length that might have alarmed a less busy man than Voltaire. This second letter would fill about ten of these pages. Voltaire responded by dedicating to Frederic a poem on the "Use of Science by Princes," of which he sent him a copy. The

Prince Royal, in return, gave his beloved poet a cane, the head of which was a golden bust of Socrates, and, ere the year was out, plucked up courage to send a specimen of his French verse, addressed to Voltaire; receiving in return manuscripts of great pith and moment, one a "Dissertation on the Soul," afterwards amplified for the "Philosophical Dictionary." The correspondents grew ever fonder. Voltaire "sheds tears of joy" on receiving the long letter mentioned above. Frederic, on his part, is thrown into such an agitation by the arrival of a letter from Cirey that hours pass before he is calm enough to gather its full meaning.

"Towards the hour [he wrote in 1737] when the post usually arrives, all my servants are out on the road to bring me my packet. Impatience immediately seizes me, also; I run to the window, and then, tired of seeing nothing come, I return to my usual occupations. If I hear a noise in the antechamber, I am there! '*Ah, what is it? Give me my letters! No news?*' My imagination far outstrips the courier. At last, after such proceedings have continued some hours, behold, my letters arrive! I break the seals. I look for your writing (often in vain), and, when I perceive it, my agitation hinders me from breaking the seal. I read, but so fast that I am obliged sometimes to read the letter three times over before my mind is calm enough to understand what I have read; and it happens, even, that I do not succeed until the next day."

He might well make the last statement, for one of Voltaire's letters, to which the above was a reply, fills twenty-seven large printed pages, and contained a metaphysical discourse upon the question of Liberty and Necessity. Soon there was an interchange of civilities and letters between Madame du Châtelet and the prince, which continued as long as she lived. Soon Thieriot was appointed to write for the prince an occasional letter of literary news from Paris, a duty ill performed by that idle and luxurious parasite. During 1737 the prince's letters came pretty regularly to the château once a month; in 1738 he wrote seventeen times; in 1740, the year of his accession, twenty-seven times.

Such a correspondence could not remain a secret. Thieriot was before long enabled to show to the illustrious supper-tables of Paris a copy of "a very curious letter" which the Prince

Royal of Prussia (the prince, you know, who came near having his head cut off by his ogre of a father, a few years since) had lately written to Voltaire. All Europe soon heard of it. The gazettes, even, presumed to mention it. A Holland paper stated that the golden head of the cane sent to the poet was "a portrait of the prince." "Was it, indeed?" asks Voltaire. "No," replied Frederic; "my portrait is neither good-looking enough nor rare enough for me to give you. It is of Socrates, who was to Greece less than you are to France."

Voltaire, we must own, meant to get from this correspondence all the support it could furnish against the powers that kept the key of the Bastille and could drive him from his home and country without a moment's warning. At the same time, he fulfilled, to the very best of his ability and light, the duty, the opportunity, which had fallen in his way, of influencing a mind destined to rule a country. He spared no toil to give this young man the best he had. Both were under illusion. Frederic had seen beautiful works in a gallery, and seen them with the adoring rapture of ingenuous youth; but the artist — with a smudge of clay upon his nose, with his indigestions, irritabilities, servilities, vanities, and all the catalogue of his human foibles and frailties — he had not seen. Nor did Voltaire yet know how much more a kingdom governs a king than a king governs a kingdom. Hence both were destined to some disenchantment.

Voltaire was beginning to have his corps of young disciples, — known to him and unknown, — who were, by and by, to extend his influence. Many young men in Europe, and, here and there, one or two in Virginia, Maryland, Massachusetts, and Pennsylvania, felt towards him very much as Frederic of Prussia felt. Never was there such an untiring and dexterous sower of seed; and now the seed was sprouting in many parts of the field. He berated his young friends soundly when he thought they deserved it, especially the idle and neglectful. His patience with such was amazing in so impatient a man; and even when he had exhausted every means of rousing them to exertion he could not cast them off; or, if he did, was swift to welcome them again on the least sign of improvement. Note these few sentences from his letters of this period: —

[To Thieriot.] "Yes; I *will* scold you till I have cured you of your indolence. You live as if man had been created only to sup; and you exist only between ten P. M. and two A. M. When you are old and abandoned, will it be a consolation to you to say, 'Formerly I drank champagne in good company'?"

[To Cideville.] "Tell Linant to be modest, humble, and serviceable. Your applause and friendship have been a sweet poison that has turned his head. Me he hates, because I have spoken frankly to him. Deserve his hatred in your turn, or he is lost."

[To Helvetius, young author.] "It costs you nothing to think, but it costs infinitely to write. I therefore preach to you eternally that art of writing which Boileau has so well known and so well taught: that respect for the language, that connection and sequence of ideas, that air of ease with which he conducts his readers, that naturalness which is the fruit of art, and that appearance of facility which is due to toil alone. A word out of place spoils the most beautiful thought."

[To Helvetius.] "Do you wish an infallible little rule for verse? Here it is: See if your thought, as you have written it in verse, is beautiful in prose also."

[To a young poet without fortune.] "Think first to improve your circumstances. First live; then compose."

[To Thieriot.] "I envy the beasts two things, — their ignorance of evil to come, and their ignorance of what is said of them."

[To Frederic.] "Learned men there will always be at Berlin; but men of genius, men who in communicating their soul render others wise, these elder sons of Prometheus who go about distributing the celestial fire among ill-organized masses, — of these there will always be very few in any country."

[To Helvetius.] "The body of an athlete and the soul of a sage, — these are what we require to be happy."

[To Maupertuis, invited to Prussia.] "It is a beautiful age, this, when men of letters hesitate to repair to the courts of kings; but if they do not hesitate, the age will be much more beautiful."

[To Frederic.] "Those who say that the flames of religious wars are extinguished, pay, it seems to me, too much honor to human nature. The same poison still subsists, though less developed; the plague that seems stifled reproduces from time to time germs capable of infecting the earth."

CHAPTER XXXII.

FLIGHT INTO HOLLAND.

The pleasant excitement caused by the prince's letter had subsided, and life at Cirey was going its usual course. The marquise was still restoring parts of the old château; Voltaire was building an annex for his apparatus; and they were rivals for the possession of the workmen. "Madame has taken all my men," he complains sometimes, impatient to get his laboratory in working order. There were periods of such peaceful, happy, and honorable labor during the early years of their settlement at Cirey that it seemed as if their dream was realized, and, unlike Faust, they could say to the gliding hour, "Stay, thou art fair!"

The children were occupied with their tutor, — good children, Voltaire assures us; the boy, afterwards that Duke du Châtelet who lost his head under the reign of the guillotine, was now a little scholar learning Latin fables, enraptured to receive on his birthday a silver watch, good or bad, that had cost three louis d'or. The marquis, his father, when not with his regiment, was hunting, or visiting his foundries and iron mines, or riding to the neighboring châteaux; coming home with an excellent appetite to eat, and, as soon as he had eaten, bestowing upon an intellectual company the favor of his friendly departure. He is "the worthiest gentleman I ever knew," says his wife in her correspondence. She invariably speaks of him with respect, often with warm eulogium; and he, as we are assured, was gratified at his wife's celebrity.

Madame was almost as studious as her friend, when there were no guests to entertain; for, besides her geometry, she was now learning English and Italian. She was translating Mandeville's "Fable of the Bees;" and she, too, as well as Voltaire, was grappling with Pope's "Essay on Man." One verse she remarks, delighted her very much: "An honest

man 's the noblest worck of God." This she thought exceedingly fine; but there was a couplet in the same book which, she says, shocked Voltaire: —

> "All reason's pleasure, all the joys of sense,
> Lie in three words, — health, peace, and competence."

These lines omitted *love*. "Pope is to be pitied," says Voltaire, in an epigram suggested by the passage; "he is neither happy nor wise." Madame was all enthusiasm for England and the English. She intended to visit that home of freedom as soon as she had devised a pretext; for, as she remarks, the marquis, one of the best of men, would not understand her real reason for going, which was simply to instruct herself. "You have seen the 'Julius Cæsar' of Shakespeare," she writes to Algarotti, in England; "you are going to see 'Onfort' and 'Blenkeim;' and, what is still better, you see men worthy to associate with you." She quotes with approbation two lines of Hervey: —

> "O freedom, benefactress fair,
> How happy who thy blessings share!"

For a year or more she was blessed in being able to render Voltaire important aid in a work near his heart. In the autumn of 1735, Algarotti, a young Italian who employed the leisure that wealth gives in patriotic and intellectual labors, spent six weeks at Cirey, where he talked frequently with its inmates upon an amiable project he had partly executed of putting Newton's "Principia" into a series of Italian dialogues for ladies. He read some of the dialogues at Cirey, and Voltaire applauded the scheme, which was completed, with happy results to Italy and to other countries; for Algarotti's work was translated into several languages. Its best result was in suggesting to Voltaire the idea of doing for France what his young friend was doing for Italy. In his English Letters he had given Newton the place of honor, and this at a time when Newton's philosophy was unknown to the many and despised by the few. Out of England there were not in the world, probably, thirty Newtonians when Voltaire wrote upon Newton in his English Letters. He determined, in 1735, to write a volume, giving in a clear, exact, but popular form, the substance of Newton's work, which, being in Latin, and algebra, was, is, and will always

remain inaccessible except to the learned. It was a project worthy of a patriot and a scholar thus to place the best intellectual treasure of a foreign land within easy reach of the whole educated class of his own; and it was peculiarly *his* work who felt that knowledge is the antidote to superstition, and that superstition was poisoning the life of France.

From the middle of 1735 to the end of 1736, Newton was his principal task. "Thalia, Thalia," he wrote from the midst of it to Mademoiselle Quinault, who was playing in his "Prodigal Son," "if I were at Paris, I would work only for you. You would make me an amphibious animal, comic six months of the year, and tragic the other six; but there is in the world a devil of a Newton, who has found out how much the sun weighs, and of what color the rays are which compose light. This strange man has turned my head." And to his ancient professor, Abbé d'Olivet, in October, 1736: "At present I am occupied in learning how much the sun weighs; one folly the more. 'What does it matter,' you will ask, 'how much it weighs, provided we enjoy it?' Oh, it matters much to us deep thinkers, for it relates to the grand principle of gravitation. My dear friend, my dear master, Newton is the greatest man that ever lived, — the greatest, I mean, as the giants of old are compared with children who play with cherry-stones. Nevertheless, let us not be discouraged; let us gather some flowers in this world which he measured, which he weighed, which he alone knew. Let us sport under the arms of this Atlas who carries the sky; let us compose dramas, odes, rubbish. Love me; console me for being so small. Adieu, my dear friend, my dear master." In this light, familiar way he spoke of a piece of work that evidently tasked the united powers of Madame du Châtelet and himself, and which filled months with arduous, fascinating toil.

Thus they were employed at the beginning of Christmas week in 1736. The long and honorable labor was substantially done; only the last two chapters being incomplete. The weather was cold; and Voltaire, a chilly mortal, from his unceasing, inordinate industry, stirred seldom from the warmth of the fire. He loved a fire. He was a rare heaper-on of fuel, and visitors wondered at the number of cords of wood daily consumed in the vain attempt to warm the old château.

But the poet's corner was warm and snug enough, and he clung to it; for the earth was covered with snow, and the air was thick with wintry storm.

It was Saturday, December 21st, the longest night of the year. A letter arrives from the "guardian angel" of the house, D'Argental, — a letter of warning! The peace of this abode rested upon a promise which the Keeper of the Seals had given again and again to the Duchess de Richelieu, that he would begin no proceeding against Voltaire without giving her notice. Notice had been given! D'Argental forwarded it swiftly to Cirey. The pretext of the threatened prosecution seems to have astounded the inmates of the château even more than the threat itself. It was a merry poem of a hundred and twenty lines, called "The Worldling" (Le Mondain), suggested by the "Fable of the Bees," and written in the gay hours following the success of "Alzire," a few months before. The poem was a jovial explosion of anti-Pascalism; harmless if taken as a joke, nor likely to be taken otherwise except by a Tartuffe.

> "Regret who will the good old time,
> And the age of gold, and Astrea's reign,
> And the beautiful days of Saturn and of Rhea,
> And the garden of our first parents."

"For my part," continued the poet, "I love luxury and even softness [*mollesse*], all the pleasures, all the arts, cleanliness, taste, decoration; and so does every honest man." One of the lines of this poem has remained current coin in France ever since: "Le superflu, chose très nécessaire."[1]

The offense of this poem was supposed to lie in a few lines referring to the legend of Adam and Eve: "My dear Adam, my gourmand, my good father, what did you do in the garden of Eden? Did you toil for this stupid human race of ours? Did you caress Madame Eve, my mother? Confess to me that both of you had long nails, a little black and dirty, your hair slightly out of order, your complexion dark, your skin brown and tanned. Without decency, the most fortunate love is love no more; it is a shameful need. Immediately tired of one another, they sup genteelly under an oak upon water, millet, and acorns; then sleep upon the ground. Such

[1] The superfluous, a thing very necessary.

is the condition of man in a state of pure nature." To this he contrasts the daily life of a rich Frenchman of that period, to whom all the arts ministered, and who enjoyed the refined delights of mind, taste, and sense. The poem concludes with a few lines which utter the feelings of millions of schoolboys, whose souls have wearied of Telemachus and never-ending preach: "Now, Monsieur Telemachus, vaunt as you may your little Ithaca, where your Cretans, dismally virtuous, poor in goods, rich in abstinence, go without everything in order to have abundance, I consent willingly to be whipped within your walls if ever I go to seek *there* my happiness."

At the instigation of Boyer, preceptor of the dauphin, a priest whose name comes down to us laden with Voltaire's contemptuous ridicule, the aged Cardinal de Fleury consented to the prosecution of the author of the "Mondain." D'Argental's warning was emphatic and urgent. "But for the respect felt for your House," he said, "M. de Voltaire would long ago have been arrested, and it is now in contemplation to write to M. du Châtelet, requesting that he no longer give him an asylum." It was this last menace that threw the lady into such extreme apprehension, since it threatened to put an end to their scheme of life. The marquis, true child of his period, had no scruples with regard to the morality of the situation, but he would have died for its decorums. Madame laughed at the idea of such extreme respect felt for their House, when the château of a Prince de Guise had not sufficed to protect her poet; but all the more was she alarmed at a danger of which she knew not the extent, nor the real cause.

At length, after agonizing conflicts of feeling, she consented to his temporary departure. He should at least cross the frontier, and await the development of events. If the storm blew over, he could return. If not, he must seek an abode in some country — England, Holland, Prussia — where a poet and philosopher could not be turned out of his home into the snow by a dull theologian ambitious to wear a red hat. It was nine in the evening when she was brought to consent to this project, and they determined to leave that very night; she to go with him as far as Vassy, four miles off, the nearest village where he could get post-horses. We have the letter which he

wrote to D'Argental at Vassy early on Sunday morning, while, perhaps, the horses were harnessing: —

"Your friend cannot endure that I should remain longer in a country where I am treated so inhumanly. We have left Cirey; at four o'clock in the morning we are at Vassy, where I am to take post-horses. But, my true, my tender and honored friend, now that the moment arrives when I must separate myself forever from one who has done all for me, — who for me left Paris, left all her friends, and all the agreeable things of life, — one whom I adore and ought to adore, you know what I feel; the situation is horrible. I should set out with joy inexpressible; I would go to see the Prince of Prussia, who often invites me; I would put between envy and me a space so wide that I should be troubled by it no more; I would live in foreign countries like a Frenchman who will always respect his own country; I should be free, and should not abuse my liberty; I should be the happiest man in the world; but your friend is before me in a flood of tears. My heart is pierced. Will it be necessary to let her return alone to a château which she has rebuilt only for me, and deprive myself of the charm of my life, because I have enemies at Paris? It is, assuredly, to unite the absurdity of the age of gold and the barbarity of the age of iron to menace me for such a work. If you deem the storm too violent, send us word to the usual address, and I shall continue my journey; if you believe it calmed, I shall come to a halt. But what a frightful life! I would rather die than be eternally tormented by the dread of losing my liberty upon the most trifling complaint, without form of law. I submit all to you; see what I ought to do."

They separated at Vassy on Sunday morning; he taking the road to Lorraine, she returning to the void and desolate château at Cirey. She heard nothing of him until the Friday following, when good news came. He had reached the frontier in safety, and had gone on toward Brussels, a hundred and fifty miles distant, where he was to be addressed as Monsieur Renol, merchant. Best of all, his health had not suffered. "His unfortunate health," wrote the marquise to D'Argental, "always supports journeys better than we should dare hope, because then he works less. Still, when I look out upon the earth covered with snow, and the weather so dismal and thick; when I think of the climate to which he is going, and his extreme sensitiveness to cold, I am ready to die of grief. I would endure his absence if I could be assured of his health."

Her long and almost daily letters to their guardian angel,

D'Argental, show how her heart was torn with apprehension and anxiety during the next two months. She brooded over the situation. She imagined new explanations. She feared a collision between Voltaire and Rousseau at Brussels. She dreaded lest her poet should go to the Prince Royal of Prussia, and never return to Cirey. That prince might be amiable, but he was not king, and he had an ogre of a father, who might even arrest a French poet and send him packing home to a Keeper of the Seals. The ogre would have liked nothing better. That metaphysical treatise, too, that thirty-page letter to the prince upon Liberty and Necessity, — what insanity to trust such a dreadful package of explosive matter out of their own hands! "A Treatise," wrote madame, "*reasonable* enough to bring its author to the stake; a book a thousand times more dangerous, and, assuredly, more punishable, than the 'Pucelle.'" And the prince to have in his custody such a work as that! How likely it was to fall into the hands of the Prussian ministry, and so reach his father, and thus the French ambassador, and finally the French ministry! To confide such a work to a prince of twenty-four years, unformed, whom a fit of sickness might render religious! To make the happiness of her life depend upon the discretion and fidelity of the Prince Royal, merely to gratify a foolish vanity of showing the work to a young man who could not appreciate it. Thus she tormented herself with apprehensions of evil, shut up in the dead of winter in an old country château, which only *his* presence could for a day have made endurable. For some time she indulged the fancy that one of her own relations had taken this method of gratifying an enmity against her. So she was wretched in the belief that *she* had been the cause of his unhappiness. But she had one comfort: "Happily, I am sure of M. du Châtelet. He is the most honorable and the most estimable man I know, and I should be the basest of creatures if I did not think so." Again, "It is a happiness unique to live with a man so worthy."

The traveler was by no means so unhappy as she. At Brussels he did not fall foul of Rousseau, and the actors there celebrated the arrival of M. Renol, merchant, by performing the tragedy of "Alzire," written by M. de Voltaire, poet. The same coincidence marked the arrival of M. Renol at Anvers,

the next large city of Flanders. The gazettes informed the public that M. de Voltaire was on his way to visit the Prince Royal of Prussia; and that prince, on learning the true cause of his leaving Cirey, sent a messenger to offer him the use of the Prussian ambassador's house in London. The prince overwhelmed him with sympathy and attention. Voltaire received four letters from him at the same time, besides a copy of Wolf's "Metaphysics" and a cargo of French verses. Continuing his journey, he reached Amsterdam, still as M. Renol, merchant; but there the transparent disguise was laid aside. He had a world of business at the Dutch capital, where a complete and authorized edition of his works was in course of publication, and where he intended to have an edition of his "Elements of Newton" published simultaneously with one at Paris. At Leyden, where he spent several days, he improved the opportunity to submit knotty points in Newton to the learned professors of the university, particularly to Professor s' Gravesande, a staunch Newtonian. Twenty English gentlemen of the suite of George II. called upon him at Leyden, and he received them, busy as he was. His mind seemed absorbed in Newton during most of his stay in Holland.

"I live here," he wrote to D'Argental, "quite like a philosopher. I study much; I see little company; I try to understand Newton, and I try to make him understood. I console myself by study for the absence of my friends. It is not possible at present for me to recast the 'Prodigal Son.' I could well enough labor at a tragedy in the morning and at a comedy in the evening; but to pass in the same day from Newton to Thalia, I do not feel the force for it. Wait till the spring, gentlemen; *la poësie* will serve her quarter; but just now it is the turn of science. If I do not succeed with Newton, I shall console myself very quickly with you."

The agonizing letters of Madame du Châtelet imploring his return soon prevailed; and in March, 1737, after an absence of nearly three months, he gave out on all sides that he was going to England, and slipped quietly back to Cirey. "Be sure and not forget that I am in England," he writes to Abbé Moussinot.

No act of arbitrary power of which he was himself the

victim ever stirred within him so lasting indignation as this proscription of "Le Mondain." He spoke of it twenty years after with bitterness, and it was, perhaps, the chief motive of his attempt to establish himself, at a later day, in another country. He felt it the more acutely because the abhorred Rousseau was the witness and harbinger of his discredit. To Rousseau he attributed scandalous paragraphs which appeared in the gazettes, informing Europe that the author of the English Letters had been driven (*chassé*) from France, never to return, and had gone to Leyden for the purpose of defending atheism against Professor s' Gravesande. These reports reached Paris, reached the government, and he asked the professor to "write two words to the Cardinal de Fleury," to set him right with that minister; for, said he, "all my property is in France, and I am under a necessity of destroying an imposture which in your country I should content myself with despising, as you would."

Madame du Châtelet, and she alone, brought him back to France. "A man of letters," he wrote to D'Argental, soon after his return to Cirey, "ought to live in a free country, or make up his mind to lead the life of a timorous slave, whom other slaves, jealous of him, continually accuse to the master. In France I have nothing to expect but such persecutions; they will be my only recompense. I feel that I shall always be the victim of the first calumniator. In vain I hide in obscurity; in vain I write to no one; it will be known where I am, and my obstinate concealment will perhaps render my retreat culpable. Thus, I live in continual alarm without knowing how I can parry the blows dealt me every day. There is no likelihood of my ever returning to Paris, to expose myself again to the furies of superstition and envy. I shall live at Cirey or in a free land. *I have always said to you that if my father, my brother, or my son were prime minister of a despotic state, I would leave it to-morrow!* Judge what must be my repugnance on finding myself in such a state to-day! But, after all, Madame du Châtelet is to me more than a father, a brother, or a son."

He wrote, nevertheless, a conciliatory letter to one of the ministers, M. de Maurepas; to whom, also, madame sent a propitiatory present of two bucks, much fearing that they

would reach him the worse for their journey, — *pourris*, as she plainly expressed it.

Was he going to be a good boy, then, and write no more Mondains and essays upon Liberty and Necessity? That was Madame du Châtelet's desire. She implored him to be "prudent" (*sage*); she strove, as she said, to "save him from himself;" she begged him to leave out of his new edition the passages that were most "burnable." That, however, was not Voltaire's interpretation of the case. As soon as he was well settled at Cirey again, in the spring of 1737, he amused himself by writing a "Defense of the Mondain," a poem a little longer than the "Mondain" itself, and, if possible, more audacious, more comic, more gracefully effective and murderous. "At table yesterday, by a sad chance, I found myself seated by a master hypocrite." The poem consists of the conversation between the poet and the priest; and this device gave him an opportunity, which he made the most of, to show that, whatever abstinence priests might preach, they did not deny themselves mundane luxuries. His description of this luxurious churchman guzzling perfumed and amber-colored canary, after consigning the author of "the Mondain" to perdition, is extremely diverting. Nor does he omit to adduce the example of Solomon, held up as the wisest of men; who, however, carried luxurious indulgence to a point which the Mondain would not presume to attempt. "A thousand beauties? That is much for a sage! Give me one. One is enough for me, who have not the honor to be either sage or king."

He wrote yet another poem, entitled "The Use of Life: A Reply to Criticism upon the Mondain," in which he inculcated moderation and temperance. "The secret of happiness is to moderate your desires." "To enjoy the pleasures, you must know how to leave them." Prosperity, adversity, — these are but names; "our happiness is in ourselves alone."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

VOLTAIRE AND SCIENCE.

For about four years — 1735 to 1739 — science was the chief pursuit of the inmates of the château of Cirey. The new impulse toward science, originating in the Royal Society, and stimulated by Sir Isaac Newton's sublime career, reached France soon after Voltaire's return from England, and kept on its way round the world. It set printer Franklin and his leather-aproned junto rubbing electrical tubes in Philadelphia. It made farmer Bartram of Pennsylvania a botanist, and Jefferson in Virginia a natural philosopher. It captivated Voltaire in 1735, and held him long enthralled. Among his friends and instructors at Leyden, the Leyden jar was soon to be invented. As in all progressive times, so in that wonderful century of seed-sowing, the boundaries of human knowledge were greatly enlarged; and it was inevitable that so sympathetic a spirit as Voltaire should endeavor to lend a helping hand.

He believed, too, in a varied culture. He was prone to undervalue the man of one talent; the nature with only one cultivated field; the poet, like J. B. Rousseau, who could do nothing but poetry; the man of business who was only a business man; the philosopher who always and only philosophized. He said, more than once, that he should have venerated Newton the more if Newton had written some *vaudevilles* for the London stage. Friends remonstrated with him upon his absorption in pursuits that seemed to them foreign to his nature. He had been a punctual and profuse correspondent until science possessed him: then he often forgot or delayed to answer his letters. "What shall you gain," asked Cideville, "by knowing the pathway of light and the gravitation of Saturn?"

"We must give our souls," he replied, "all the forms possi-

ble to them. It is a fire which God has confided to us; we ought to nourish it with whatever we find that is most precious. We must have all imaginable modes of intellectual life, open all the doors of our souls to all the sciences and all the sentiments; and, provided that they do not enter pell-mell, there is room within us for every one of them."

And so for four or five years he was a natural philosopher. He filled his gallery with costly apparatus, — air-pumps, thermometers, furnaces, crucibles, retorts, telescopes, microscopes, prisms, scales, and compasses. Failing to get a competent chemist who could say mass on Sundays in the chapel of the château, he endeavored to form and train a young man for the work of the laboratory alone, which answered better. For a year or two he had a chemical assistant at Cirey; and, indeed, many of his experiments must have required the aid of several men, — weighing a ton of red-hot iron, for example. We perceive that Prince Frederic caught the new taste, and followed his example. The prince sowed radish-seed in an exhausted receiver to see if seed would germinate without air. He worked his air-pump diligently. It was "the mode" with the intelligent portion of the public not to be content with their ignorance of natural laws.

The chief results of Voltaire's studies and experiments in science occupy two volumes of his works, and strengthen every other volume produced in the latter half of his life. One of these volumes is devoted to his "Elements of Newton's Philosophy," — a work of great celebrity in its day, obsolete now only because Newton's philosophy is part and parcel of human thought in every civilized land.

It is interesting to notice throughout the wide range of Voltaire's works how Newton had fascinated him. In London, both Franklin and Voltaire, almost at the same time, appear to us as if haunting Newton's neighborhood; longing for a sight of the aged discoverer, and longing in vain; happy to converse with those who had known him. When he was in England, Voltaire tells us, he was denied the consolation of seeing the great philosopher, who was then sinking to the tomb; but he frequently met Dr. Samuel Clarke, Newton's friend and disciple, who continued the controversy with Leibnitz after the master's death. From conversations with Dr. Clarke he de-

rived that impulse towards metaphysics which influenced him for some years. But, he tells us, he soon perceived the insufficiency of the metaphysical systems then in vogue. "One day, full of those grand subjects which charm the mind by their immensity, I said to a very enlightened member of the company, 'Mr. Clarke is a much greater metaphysician than Mr. Newton.' 'That may be,' was the cool reply. 'It is as if you should say that one of them plays with balloons better than the other.' This reply made me reënter into myself. Since that time I have dared to pierce some of those balloons of metaphysics, and have found that nothing came out of them except wind. So, when I said to M. s' Gravesande, 'Vanity of vanities, and metaphysics are vanity,' he replied, 'I am very sorry that you are right.'"

Another English anecdote of Dr. Clarke he called to mind on beginning to write his "Elements of Newton," and he introduced it very happily, as if to disarm the prejudices of those who regarded the philosophy of Descartes as part of their orthodoxy. These are the opening sentences of his work upon the "Principia:" —

"Newton was intimately persuaded of the existence of a God, and he understood by that word not only an infinite being, all-powerful, eternal and the Creator, but a Master who has established a relation between himself and his creatures; for, without that relation, the knowledge of a God is only a sterile idea, which, by the hope of impunity, would seem to invite to crime every reasoner of perverse disposition. Thus that great philosopher makes a singular remark at the end of his 'Principia.' It is that we do not say, My Eternal, my Infinite, because those attributes have no relation to our nature; but we say, and ought to say, My God, by which we must understand the Master and the Preserver of our lives and the object of our thoughts. I remember that, in several conversations which I had in 1726 with Dr. Clarke, that philosopher never pronounced the name of God except with an air of seriousness and respect very noticeable. I mentioned to him the impression which that made upon me. He told me it was from Newton that he had insensibly taken the habit, — which, indeed, ought to be that of all men. The whole philosophy of Newton conducts necessarily to the knowledge of the Supreme Being, who has created everything, and arranged everything according to his will."

With this prelude, so just to Newton, he enters upon the

first part of his task, which is to give an account of the controversy between Newton and Leibnitz upon the metaphysics of his theme. Newton's opinion was that God, infinitely free, as infinitely powerful, had done all things without any other reason than his own will; the planets, for example, moving from west to east, rather than from east to west, simply and solely because such was God's will. Leibnitz, on the contrary, held that God's will was determined by reasons adequate to control it. Then, said Newton, God is not free. Then, replied Leibnitz, God is capricious. Newton and Leibnitz were also at variance upon the nature of the connection between the soul and the body, and upon many other questions not then ripe even for serious consideration. "If any one," says Voltaire, "wishes to know what Newton thought upon the soul, and upon the manner in which it operates, I shall reply that he followed none of the current opinions of his time. Do you ask what that man *knew* upon this subject, who had submitted the infinite to calculation, and had discovered the laws of gravity? *He knew how to doubt.*"

The second part of Voltaire's work contains the exposition of Newton's researches in optics. Here he was by no means either a translator or a compiler. He tried all the experiments described by Newton. He had in his gallery at Cirey a dark chamber, arranged according to Newton's description, in which he performed the experiments with prisms of various sizes and kinds which are now so familiar. Every intelligent visitor to the château was sure to be taken to this dark room to see him break a ray of light into Sir Isaac's brilliant rainbow. He invented some experiments of his own, and brought the air-pump into requisition to see the effect of a vacuum upon the prismatic colors. He was exceedingly pleased with his prisms and his dark chamber; he reflected much upon the Newtonian theory of light, but, like most other philosophers, he left the subject where Newton left it in his last edition of 1726.

The difficult part of Voltaire's task was in explaining the principle of gravitation. Sir Isaac himself gives a list of the works necessary to be understood by a student before attempting his "Principia," — a somewhat formidable catalogue. Most mathematicians, however, recommend a much more ex-

tensive preparation. Whatever was necessary for the clear understanding of this part of Newton's work, Voltaire acquired. He wrestled mightily with his task; for at college he had had no mathematical training. With the assistance of Maupertuis, of Madame du Châtelet, of the learned professors of Leyden University, and his own unconquerable resolution, he mastered the work, and gave an account of it which any educated person of good intelligence can follow and enjoy. His essay is free from those sallies of wit and satire, those side-blows at the various objects of his antipathy, which mark almost every other production of his pen. Descartes, whose philosophy Newton's displaced, and Leibnitz, Newton's chief opponent, he treats with the respect due to their great qualities, while dissenting with perfect candor from their positions.

Before dispatching the last chapters to his printers in Amsterdam, he sent a copy of the whole work to the Chancellor of France, asking for a royal privilege to publish it. He expected to receive the privilege. "The most imbecile fanatic, the most envenomed hypocrite," he wrote to a friend, "can find nothing in it to object to." Six months passed away, and he had received no answer to his application. By way of showing, as he says, "a docility without reserve," he suspended the publication in Holland; and, to make the suspension sure, he withheld the manuscript of the last two chapters. Other months passed, and no news from the censorship. The Dutch printers, impatient, engaged a local mathematician to complete the work; which they published, swarming with errors, with a belittling title-page of their own concocting, and the last pages added by another hand. Finally, to complete the series of misfortunes, the Chancellor of France, M. d'Aguesseau, refused the privilege of publication, and left the author to struggle as he might with this complication of embarrassments.

The most bigoted reader would look through the work in vain to find either cause or pretext for the ministerial ban. The reason was the freedom with which he had handled the theories of Descartes, who supposed that the earth and the moon were whirled along from west to east by a vast number of minute particles rushing eternally in the same direction. Descartes ruled in science and in literature. Polite society

was Cartesian. As M. Saigey remarks, "it savored of good breeding" to profess a belief in the Cartesian whirlwinds. *Grandes dames*, and the young ladies who composed their courts, had upon their toilet-tables Fontenelle's "Conversations upon the Plurality of Worlds," in which the astronomy of Descartes was adorned with all the graces of his style. Descartes was defended against Newton in the most elegant circles. The Duchess du Maine and her court were Cartesian, and nearly all institutions of learning in France, which took notice of astronomy at all, illustrated the wisdom and the power of the Creator by describing the Cartesian whirlwinds with whatever eloquence they possessed.

This was precisely the condition of things which a competent author would desire, if he were sure he had the truth on his side. Voltaire's work, impatiently expected, and long delayed by the perversity of things and men, struggled into life at last, and made a genuine sensation. The errors of the first Holland edition published without his knowledge, the novelty of a poet appearing in the character of a man of science, the author's prompt, vehement explanations and remonstrances, the publication at length of a correct and authorized version, the opposition of the polite world, the flaming zeal of the few Newtonians, all contributed to enhance the celebrity and influence of the book. The "Dutch corsairs," as he styled the impatient printers of Amsterdam, had taken the liberty to entitle the work "The Elements of the Philosophy of Newton Adapted to Every Capacity" (*mis à la portée de tout le monde*). The malign Desfontaines remarked, in his notice, that there was one error of the Dutch edition which the author had not corrected. For *portée*, said he, read *porte;* since it was only at everybody's *door* that the new work was put. The work made its way through a vast number of doors, and in ten years there were scarcely ten Cartesians in France.

Before Newton was off his hands, he was immersed in original researches. The Academy of Sciences proposed as the subject for the prize essay of 1738 "The Nature of Fire and its Propagation." Voltaire, who was living in a land of fire, near forges and foundries vomiting flame by night and day, resolved to compete for the prize, and entered upon a course of laborious experiment. We have seen him, on previous

pages, setting the Abbé Moussinot at work among the chemists of Paris. At Chaumont he frequently visited a foundry, where he had scales prepared for weighing huge masses of iron, cold and hot, as well as great pots for weighing melted iron. He weighed from two pounds to two thousand pounds, first cold, and then hot. He worked thoroughly and deliberately, beginning by having iron chains put to the scales instead of ropes, and taking the precaution to be surrounded by "ten ocular witnesses," of whom one, doubtless, was Madame du Châtelet. What an unwonted scene in a Chaumont foundry! He had three cast-iron pots, very thick, hung upon scales near the furnace, into one of which he caused a hundred pounds of liquid iron to be poured; into another, thirty-five pounds; into the third, twenty-five. After six hours' cooling, he found that his hundred-pound mass weighed one hundred and four pounds, and that the others had increased in proportion. This experiment he repeated many times, always with the same results. Then he tried it with pots of gray ore, "less metallic" than the cast-iron, and there was neither increase nor diminution of weight in the contents of the pots. Yet he was long in doubt whether heat possessed the property of weight, because the results of his experiments were not uniform, and he could not always determine whether the occasional increase of weight was due to heat or to the absorption of matter from the atmosphere or the vessel.

He performed a series of experiments with hot and cold liquids, heating various liquids separately, mixing them hot, mixing them cold, pouring a pint of boiling liquid upon a pint of cold, and blending them in all conceivable ways; which led him to the discovery that the temperature resulting from mixing two liquids of different temperatures is not always the mean temperature. "I have prepared," he says in his essay, "some experiments upon the heat which liquids communicate to liquids and solids to solids, and I will give a table of the same, if the gentlemen of the Academy are of opinion that it could be of any utility."

He experimented laboriously upon the second part of his subject, the Propagation of Fire. He tried one experiment which would not have been safe in the drier atmosphere of America, where a spark from a cigar on a still day can set a

mountain or a plain on fire. He had a piece of forest, eighty feet by twenty, partly cleared, but strewn with fallen trees and cut wood; to one end of which he applied fire by means of straw. The day being serene and dry, the fire advanced twenty feet in an hour, and then went out. But the next day there was a high wind, and the whole eighty feet was burnt over in an hour.

The science of one century is the ignorance of the next. It was impossible that an essay upon Fire, written in 1737, should have final scientific value, except to mark how far the subject had then been developed; as Pliny, in his "Natural History," gives us an imperishable and priceless cyclopædia of human ignorance in the first century. Voltaire's essay is all acuteness and tact; but it is not free from a little half-conscious attitudinizing. The doctors recommended him, about this time, to take more exercise in the open air; hunting, for example. Why not hunt, in a hunting country? Whereupon he requests the Abbé Moussinot to send him from Paris the complete apparatus and costume of a hunter. He wore it once or twice, but he soon discovered that killing animals and birds for pleasure was not very congenial. He adhered longer to science than to shooting; but we catch glimpses of the trappings of the investigator; we observe a polite company gathered round the iron pots of liquid iron, with a poet in the midst of them amiably demonstrating that it is possible for a poet to know something besides verse-making.

His essay was nearly done, and he was preparing to send it to the Academy, the authorship being duly concealed according to the rule. Madame du Châtelet, who had dissented from some of his conclusions, suddenly resolved to send in a competing essay. "I wished [as she explained to Maupertuis] to try my powers under the shelter of the *incognito;* for I expected never to be known. M. du Châtelet was the only one in my confidence, and he kept the secret so well that he said nothing of it even to you at Paris. I could perform no experiment, because my project was unknown to M. de Voltaire, and I could not have concealed experiments from him. I made up my mind to compete only a month before the expiration of the time set by the Academy for sending in the essays I could only work in the night, and I was all new in these sub-

jects. M. de Voltaire's work, which was almost finished when I began mine, suggested some ideas, as well as the desire to compete. I set to work without knowing whether I should ever see my essay again, and I said nothing about it to M. de Voltaire, because I did not wish to blush before him for an undertaking which I feared might displease him. Besides, I combated almost all his ideas."

For eight successive nights she toiled at her essay, only sleeping "an hour" each night; and when nearly overcome by sleep she would plunge her hands into ice-water, walk rapidly up and down the room, and throw her arms about. Thirty essays were received from the different countries of Europe, of which five were pronounced worthy to compete. Two of these select five were written at Cirey; but the prize was divided among the other three contestants: Professor Euler, of St. Petersburg, Father Lozeraude de Fiesc, of the Jesuits, and the Count de Créqui-Canaples, a French nobleman. The essay of the eminent mathematician, Euler, contained some valuable and even memorable points; it was the work of a man of science. Those of his two associates in glory owed their laurels, as French historians of science tell us, solely to the fact that they adhered to the philosophy of Descartes, which, in 1738, was clinging to life with the tenacity of death. "It savored of good breeding to be Cartesian," — the last resource of error, that has received its death-wound. Condorcet says boldly that Voltaire's essay deserved the prize, an opinion from which M. Emile Saigey does not dissent.[1] "Voltaire's essay [says M. Saigey] is in advance of the science of that age, and we find in it many passages the value of which could not then have been appreciated."

When the news of the awards reached Cirey, the lady of the château told her secret. "I felt [she says] that a rejection shared by him was an honor to me." He took the little comedy in good part; read her essay, extolled it warmly, procured its honorable publication by the Academy, and wrote an anonymous review of it for the press, which carried the name of the authoress to the ends of Europe. She was gratified by the celebrity he gave her. He dedicated to her almost everything he published at this period, and we perceive from her

[1] La Physique de Voltaire, page 53.

letters that she did not enjoy the omission of his complimentary epistles in some of the foreign editions of his works. In the records of the Academy both essays were printed, preceded by a notice: "The authors of the two following pieces having made known their desire that they should be printed, we consent thereto with pleasure, although we cannot approve the idea advanced in either of them of the nature of fire. Both essays give evidence of great reading, great knowledge of the best works upon science, and they are filled with facts and views. Besides, the name alone of the authors can interest the public curiosity. No. 6 is by a lady of high rank, Madame du Châtelet, and the piece No. 7 is by one of our best poets."

At the head of his essay Voltaire placed two Latin verses, which have since done good service in similar ways: —

> "Ignis ubique latet, naturam amplectitur omnem,
> Cuncta parit, renovat, dividit, unit, alit." [1]

D'Alembert asked him who was the author of these lines. "My dear philosopher [he replied], those two verses are mine. I am like the Bishop of Noyon, who used to say in his sermons, 'My brethren, I took none of these truths which I have just uttered either from the Scripture or from the Fathers; all came out of the head of your bishop.'"

Continuing their scientific labors, madame published, in 1740, a work entitled "Institutions Physiques," in which she championed Leibnitz, as Voltaire had championed Newton. He wrote an extensive review of it, in which he mingled gallantry and criticism with his usual art, — not unwilling to let his readers see under what a miserable bondage religion itself struggled, when such giants as Leibnitz and Newton could gravely accept the theologian's chronology, and their pupils angrily discuss such frivolous questions as why God did not create the world six thousand years sooner than he did, and whether he *could* have done so if he had wished it.

In 1741, he sent to the Academy of Sciences an essay upon the "Computation and Nature of Moving Forces," which shows that, by dint of several years' study of science, mathematically treated, he had become a respectable mathematician. He em-

[1] Fire is hidden everywhere: fills all nature; produces, renews, divides, unites, nourishes, all things.

ploys the language of mathematics in this essay with a readiness and ease which prove familiar knowledge. He appears to have had some intention of seeking admission to the Academy of Sciences, as "a bulwark" against the hostility of those who were interested in keeping the human mind in bondage to tradition.

A few years later he wrote scientific essays on subjects more within the range of unlearned readers. The Academy of Bologna having elected him a member of their body, he acknowledged the compliment by composing an essay for them in the Italian language, upon the Changes which have occurred in our Globe. This essay shows us in an interesting manner what man did *not* know in geology about the middle of the last century. The spirit that pervades it, and which it inculcates, is the spirit to which we owe our better knowledge, — the spirit of doubt. It is in this essay that his zeal to relieve infant science from the incubus of sacred legend laid him open to retort. It is said that, even at the present day, there are provincials who believe in a literal deluge of the whole earth; but in 1746 all theologians assumed it; and that one legend, universally accepted as sacred history, would have sufficed to choke science in its cradle. In his zeal, I say, to deliver the human mind from the ignominious bondage of the deluge legend, he made light of the discovery of shells and fossils which had been found upon mountains. Geology had not then explained their presence a mile above the sea, and theologians marked them for their own.

"A stone," said he, "was discovered in the mountains of Hesse which appeared to bear the impression of a turbot, and upon the Alps a petrified pike; from which the inference has been drawn that the sea and the rivers have flowed by turns over the mountains. It were more natural to suppose that these fish, carried by a traveler and becoming spoiled, were thrown away, and, in the course of time, were petrified. But that idea was too simple and too little systematic. An anchor, they say, was found upon a mountain of Switzerland; people do not reflect that heavy burdens, particularly cannon, have often been transported in men's arms, and that an anchor may have served to hang those burdens to a cleft in the rocks. It is very probable that this anchor was taken from

one of the little ports of Lake Geneva. Finally, the story of the anchor may be fabulous; and men like better to declare that it was the anchor of a vessel which was moored in Switzerland before the deluge."

He discourses amusingly upon the question how a universal flood was brought about which covered the highest mountains, and required a quantity of water equal to twenty-four oceans. "Science," he says, "has nothing in common with miracles. Religion commands us to believe them, and reason forbids us to explain them." Dr. Burnet, he adds, conjectured that the ocean was swollen to that prodigious height by boiling; but no, that could not be; for water in boiling does not increase more than a quarter in bulk. "To what a point we are reduced when we attempt to fathom what we ought only to respect!" Twenty years later, when a great number of marine deposits had been found far above the level of the sea, he still demands proof that they *were* marine deposits. Might they not be snail shells? he asks. To such a point is an author reduced who discusses a geological question before geology exists!

During the rest of his life, though he gradually discontinued his more laborious investigations in science, he was an attentive student of nature. His essay of 1768, on "Some Singularities of Nature," shows that the habit of his mind was to observe and reflect upon the natural facts within his view. If he had lived in our day, he would have subscribed to the scientific periodicals, and kept them well supplied with the short articles their conductors love to receive, such as relate something new about bees, coral, snails, toads, or oysters, or give new conjectures concerning the formation of mountains, seas, lakes, stone, and shells. His interest in nature was genuine and lasting. When there were no visitors at the château, natural science appears to have furnished Madame du Châtelet and himself with their most familiar topics of conversation, and, particularly, the influence of natural causes upon the character and history of nations. He had much of what we may call the spirit of "Buckle's History of Civilization" in him. We catch them star-gazing, also, in the memoirs of their visitors and secretaries, who were frequently invited to survey the heavens through the telescope. If any strange creature

was exhibited in Paris during their visits to the city, they were of the people who were likely to examine it. He went to see an albino once, of whom he has left us a minute and careful description. He calls it a "white Moor," and speaks of it as belonging to "a *race* inhabiting the middle of Africa, near the kingdom of Loango." After descanting, as usual, upon the blind credulity and obstinate incredulity of men, he proceeds to give a great number of particulars of the habits and character of this non-existent race. He was credulous himself on this occasion, because it lay near his heart to remove from progressive science the stumbling-block of the Adam-and-Eve legend, and he was eager to seize every chance of showing that our race could not have sprung from a single pair.

On another occasion his incredulity proved useful. A German chemist of Alsace believed he had found the secret of making saltpetre at one twentieth the ordinary price of the article, and produced some gunpowder made of his saltpetre, which proved to be excellent. He offered to sell the secret for seventeen hundred thousand francs, and one fourth of the profits of the manufacture for twenty years. The contract was signed. The head of the powder company and a chemist of repute came to Alsace, and the experiment was performed before them with some appearance of success. The gentlemen from Paris visited Voltaire, and explained their errand. He said to the chief of the powder company, "If you do not pay the seventeen hundred thousand francs until after you have made saltpetre, you will keep your money always." The chemist declared that saltpetre had been actually made. "I do not believe it," said Voltaire. "Why not?" "Men" [was his reply] "make nothing. They unite and disunite; but it belongs only to nature to make." The German tried for three months to produce saltpetre, without success. He had found in the ruins of some ancient stables and cellars a small quantity of saltpetre, which had misled him into the belief that he could get any required quantity from the earth of that region.[1]

[1] Des Singularités de la Nature, par Voltaire. Chapter xxii.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

VISITORS AT CIREY.

No other man in Europe was so attentive to what passed at Cirey as the Prince Royal of Prussia, whose passion for Voltaire did not diminish. In the spring of 1737 he announced his purpose of sending as "ambassador" to Cirey his merry and voluble young companion, Kaiserling, who would, as he hoped, bring back to him a treasure of unpublished writings, perhaps even some cantos of "La Pucelle." "In taking leave of my little friend," wrote the prince, July 6, 1737, "I said to him, 'Think that you are going to the terrestrial paradise, — to a place a thousand times more delicious than the island of Calypso; that the goddess of those haunts yields in no degree to the beauty of the enchantress of Telemachus; that you will find in her all the charms of the mind, so preferable to those of the person; that this marvel occupies her leisure in the search after truth. There it is that you will see the human spirit in its last degree of perfection, — wisdom without austerity, enlivened by love and laughter. There you will see on the one hand the sublime Voltaire, and on the other the amiable author of "Le Mondain;" him who now soars above Newton, and now without abasement sings of Phyllis. How, my dear Césarion, shall we be able to tear you away from a retreat so full of charms? Against such attractions how weak will be the bonds of an old friendship!'"

He arrived at the château, bearing a portrait of the prince for Voltaire, an elegant writing-desk of amber for madame, an installment of M. Wolf's "Metaphysics" for both, a glowing letter of twenty pages, a packet of verses, and some German books. He had the warmest welcome, and such entertainment as no palace in Europe could then have afforded, — tragedies, comedies, burlesques, puppets, the magic-lantern, music, *fêtes*, the society of a woman skilled in the agree-

able arts, and the conversation of the most amusing man alive. "Madame," as Voltaire wrote to Thieriot, "received him so well, gave him such agreeable *fêtes*, with such an easy grace, with so little of the fuss and fatigue of a *fête*, forced him to accept extremely pretty presents in a manner so noble and so adroit, that he returned enchanted with everything he had seen, heard, and received." He did, indeed. He told his prince that when Madame du Châtelet talked he loved her mind, and when she was silent he was enamored of her person. Césarion, too, made an agreeable impression, a fluent, vivacious young man, who "spoke all languages, and sometimes spoke them all at once."

Prussians then looked to Frederic with longing and enthusiasm, weary of the arbitrary drunkard, his father; and Césarion was of course full of the prince's praises, not unmindful of his hope one day to "possess" Voltaire. "Our prince [said he] at present is not rich, and he is unwilling to borrow, because, as he says, he is mortal, and he is not sure that his father would pay his debts." But nothing was more certain than that he would recompense with striking liberality any one who should be in his service without being his subject. Upon hearing this, Voltaire extolled his friend Thieriot in terms which, it is to be feared, were not justified by events.

Kaiserling took home with him a huge and rare bundle of manuscript, — parts of "Louis XIV.," many short poems, some tracts and treatises upon philosophy, besides new editions of former works; but not a canto, not a line, of "La Pucelle"! Madame la Marquise put down her foot; she would not risk her poet again, so soon after the mishap of "Le Mondain," for the best prince in Christendom! She had the poem in custody, locked in her desk, and she would not surrender it. "The friendship with which she honors me [wrote Voltaire to Frederic] does not permit me to hazard a thing which might separate me from her forever. She has renounced all to live with me in the bosom of retreat and study. . . . . She knows that M. de Kaiserling was watched at Strasbourg, that he will be again on his return, that spies are after him, that he may be searched; and, above all, she knows that you would not willingly risk the happiness of

your true subjects at Cirey for a pleasantry in verse." After an intoxicating visit of something less than a month, the Baron de Kaiserling returned to Remusburg to inflame anew his prince's admiration for the inhabitants of the enchanted castle.

It was not every visitor who saw the interior of that abode in so rosy a light.

M. Mignot, husband of Voltaire's sister, died in 1737, leaving two marriageable daughters with insufficient portions. Voltaire played the part of a good French uncle on this occasion, and set Thieriot at work arranging for their honorable marriage, undertaking to provide for the elder both husband and *dot*. The husband whom Voltaire proposed for her was a son of Madame Champbonin, a jovial dame who lived near Cirey, and much enlivened the society of the neighborhood, — a great favorite everywhere, and extremely beloved by him. "God forbid [he wrote to Thieriot] that I should in the least constrain her inclinations. To aim at the liberty of a fellow creature appears to me a crime against humanity; it is the sin against nature." The young lady, a true child of Paris, pupil of the composer Rameau, accustomed to the gayeties of the metropolis, was not disposed to "bury herself" in a country château. He was disappointed, but yielded with the better grace because he had taken the precaution to sound his niece before taking any other step. "After all [he wrote to Thieriot], I have really no family but them, and I should be very glad to attach them to me. It is necessary to bear in mind that we become old, infirm, and that then it is sweet to find relatives attached to us by gratitude. If they marry *bourgeois* of Paris, I am their very humble servant, but they are lost to me. It is a sorry thing to be an old maid. The princesses of the blood find it very troublesome to endure a condition contrary to nature. We are born to have children. It is only certain fools of philosophers, like ourselves, who can decently avoid the general rule."

The result of much negotiation was that Mademoiselle Mignot, aged twenty-seven, married, February 25, 1738, the man of her choice, M. Denis, formerly a captain in a French regiment, then holding an office in the commissariat. Uncle Voltaire gave the pair his blessing, an invitation to pass the

honeymoon at Cirey, and thirty thousand francs, all of which they accepted. The younger lady, four months after, married Nicholas-Joseph de Dompierre, seigneur of Fontaine-Hornoy, chief of the finance bureau at Amiens. They were called simply M. and Madame de Fontaine, and the uncle of the bride gave her twenty-five thousand francs.

These young ladies had another uncle, Voltaire's "Jansenist of a brother," now styled by his friends the Abbé Arouet. He, too, behaved liberally to them. Besides attending both weddings, he gave the elder niece so handsome a present (amount unknown) that Madame du Châtelet wished that all *her* uncles and aunts had given her as much on her wedding-day. Armand Arouet was still an assiduous convulsionist, unmarried, wholly estranged from the author of the "Mondain," who suspected his austere brother of a secret marriage, and mentions that he chose his mistresses from among the prettiest convulsionists. Voltaire could not be tempted to attend either of the weddings, where, as he said, there would be "crowds of relations, quibbling puns, flat jests, broad stories to make the bride blush and the prudes purse their lips, a great noise, all talking together, giggling without merriment, heavy kisses heavily given, and little girls looking at everything out of the corner of their eyes." No such wedding could draw *him* from an enchanted castle in the country to the street of the Two Balls at Paris.

But Madame Denis and her husband visited a rich and liberal uncle at Cirey, in March, 1738. The bride saw in the château an enchanted castle indeed, but enchanted only as the oak-tree was enchanted that held Ariel in its gnarled and knotted embrace. The future mistress of Ferney was aghast at her uncle's bondage.

"I am in despair [she wrote to match-maker Thieriot]. I believe him lost to all his friends. He is bound in such a way that it appears to me impossible that he can break his chains. They are in a solitude that is frightful for humanity. Cirey is four leagues from a habitation, in a region of mountains and wastes; and they are abandoned by all their friends, having almost no one from Paris. Such is the life led by the greatest genius of our age; with a woman, it is true, of much intellect, very pretty, who employs all the art imaginable to beguile him. There is no kind of personal decoration which

she does not arrange, nor passages of the best philosophers which she does not cite, to please him. To that end nothing is spared. He appears more enchanted with her than ever. He is building a handsome addition to the château, in which there will be a dark room for experiments in natural philosophy. The theatre is very pretty, but they do not use it for want of actors. All the actors of the country for ten miles round are under orders to come to the château. They did all that was possible to have them there during our stay; but they could only exhibit to us some puppets, which were very good. We were received in perfect style. My uncle tenderly loves M. Denis; which does not astonish me, for he is very amiable."[1]

Madame Denis was not so far wrong. There was a flaw in the bond between these two gifted and brilliant persons which of necessity vitiated their union, making each a kind of slave to the other. She was always in dread of his breaking away; and he was prevented from doing so by compassion and the instinct of fidelity. He should have lived in his own château, and the family inhabiting that château should have been his family, not another man's.

Another visitor of the year 1738 makes this plainer. Madame de Grafigny was a lady whom Voltaire and Madame du Châtelet had met at the little court of King Stanislas in Lorraine, where she was an object of sympathy on account of the violence and brutality of her husband, chamberlain to the Duke of Lorraine. After years of misery she was divorced from the chamberlain, who ended his days in prison. The inmates of Cirey offered her an asylum for a time, and in December, 1738, she came. She was then forty-three years of age, unknown to fame; for it was not till she was fifty-two that the publication of her romance, "Lettres d'une Péruvienne," gave her celebrity. Her portrait shows us a handsome, full-formed woman, "fair, fat, and forty," and her writings are, as Sainte-Beuve styles them, *cailletage* (gossip). During her residence at Cirey she wrote quires of *cailletage* to a gentleman at Lunéville, where the fallen majesty of Poland spent his French allowance. A volume of these letters was published in 1820, in which we can see the routine of life at the château almost as plainly as if we had been *femme de chambre* to the writer; since, in accordance with the custom

[1] Voltaire, Pièces Inédites. Paris, 1820, page 289.

of that age and land, she wrote as freely to a man as she could have gossiped with a woman.[1]

Like Kaiserling, she was under the spell long before she reached the enchanted abode. Besides the singular favor in which the poet was held at the Polish court, the most extravagant accounts had been brought thither of the splendors of the château, the mysterious life led in it, the wizard apparatus, the dark chamber, the magician-like habits of the poet, and the unearthly fascinations of the lady of the castle. A burlesque in this taste had been published in Paris, and the château was a theme at the burlesque theatres. Kaiserling came enchanted, stayed three weeks, and went away enchanted. Madame de Grafigny came enchanted, stayed three months, and left disenchanted.

She relates her arrival at Cirey to her correspondent, who was also under the spell: —

"Upon seeing the address of this letter, you leap with joy, and you say: *Ah! Mon Dieu, she is at Cirey!* I started before daylight; I was present at the toilet of the sun. I had admirable weather and roads as far as Joinville, just as in summer, even to the dust, which one could do very well without. I reached Joinville in a little chaise of Madame Royale [Duchess de Lorraine] but there the coachman told me that it was impossible they could go further. What was I to do? I took a post-chaise. I arrived at Cirey two hours after dark, dying of fright from the state of the roads, which the devil had made horrible, expecting every moment to be overturned; paddling in the mud sometimes, for the postilions told me that if I did not alight I should be overturned. Judge of my condition! However, I arrived. The *nymph* received me very well. I remained a moment in her chamber, then went up to my own to rest. A moment after arrived, who? Your idol, holding a little candlestick in his hand, like a monk. He caressed me a thousand times; he appeared so glad to see me that his demonstrations went even to transport; he kissed my hands ten times, and questioned me about myself with a very touching air of interest. At last he went away in order to give me an opportunity to write to you. . . . .

"I left my letter to dress, for fear the supper-bell should ring. I hear nothing of it, and so I am going to add a word or two. You are astonished, perhaps, that I say, simply, the *nymph* received me very

[1] Vie Privée de Voltaire et Madame du Châtelet pendant un Séjour de six Mois à Cirey. Paris, 1820.

well ; it is all I have to tell you. No ; I forgot that she spoke to me at once of her lawsuit, without any ceremony. Her clack [*caquet*] is wonderful ; she speaks extremely fast, and just as I do when I play the Frenchwoman. She talks like an angel ; so much I perceived. She had on a robe of chintz and a large apron of black taffeta ; her black hair is very long, and it is gathered up behind to the top of her head, and curled like that of little children, which is very becoming to her. As I have seen nothing yet except her dress, I can speak to you of nothing but her dress. With regard to your *idol*, I know not if he powdered himself for my sake, but all I can tell you is that he was dressed as he would have been at Paris. The *goodman* [M. du Châtelet] leaves to-morrow for Brussels, when we three shall be alone ; and no one will shed any tears on account of it : that is a secret which we have already imparted to one another."

The summons to supper here interrupted the epistle. To understand the account she gives of the conversation at the table, the reader needs to be informed that Voltaire's feud with the poet J. B. Rousseau was assuming more importance, and was both complicated and embittered by a quarrel with the journalist Desfontaines, editor of the "Observations," referred to in the course of the repast. As we shall be obliged very soon to return to this affair, and show how authors and critics loved one another a hundred and forty years ago, it is only necessary here to say that Voltaire at this time was gunpowder to any spark of allusion to Rousseau or Desfontaines. Madame de Grafigny describes her first meal at the château : —

"I was conducted to a suite of apartments which I recognized at once to be Voltaire's. He came to receive me. No one else had arrived, and yet I had not the time to cast a glance around the room. The company placed themselves at the table, and well content was I ; and all the more when I compared this supper with my evening adventure on the road. What a thing is life ! said I to myself. A little while ago in darkness and mire ; now in an enchanted place. What is there that we did not speak of ? Poetry, science, art ; all in the tone of badinage and good breeding. I should like to be able to report to you that charming conversation. that enchanting conversation ; but it is not in me to do so. The supper was not abundant, but it was rare, elegant, and delicate ; served, also, with a profusion of silver plate. Opposite me I had five globes and all the philosophical apparatus ; for it was in the little hall that we enjoyed this unique

repast. Voltaire by my side, as polite, as attentive, as he is amiable and learned; the lord of the castle on the other side. This is to be my place every evening: thus my left ear will be sweetly charmed, while the other is very slightly bored; for the marquis says little, and goes away as soon as we leave the table. At the dessert comes the perfume; conversation as instructive as agreeable. They spoke of books, as you may well believe, and J. B. Rousseau was a topic. Oh, by our Lady! then the man remained, and the hero vanished. He would scarcely pardon any one who should praise Rousseau. At last the conversation turned upon the various kinds of poetry. 'For my part,' said the lady, 'odes [Rousseau wrote many] I cannot endure.' 'Ah, indeed!' said your idol; 'what is an ode? It is the most trifling merit to compose one. Fustian, rhapsodies, in the style of Hudibras; it is the most execrable thing in the world. I do not comprehend how honest people read such things.'

"Is not there the man? I know not how he came to speak of the 'Observations' of Desfontaines. I asked him if he had sent for them. 'Yes,' said he; and all at once he launched invectives against the author and against the work. He gave me a pamphlet to read, entitled 'A Preservative against the Observations' (Voltaire's own). which he pretends was written by one of his friends. I believe that he could not speak of Rousseau and Desfontaines without a fermentation of the blood equivalent to fever. But as it seized him we retired in order to let him go to bed.

"I have read that 'Preservative,' for it was very necessary that I should be able to say that I had read it. In sending to ask how I was, Voltaire presented to me a beautiful Newton, bound in morocco. As I do not dine to-day, I began to read Newton, instead of writing to you. Yes, my friend, instead of writing to you, although I was dying of desire to write; but you will feel how necessary it is that I should show a little eagerness in recognizing the polite and honorable attention of your idol, and to be able to speak to him of the work in the evening."

The next day Madame de Grafigny had the pleasure of inspecting Voltaire's rooms, and penned a glowing account of them to her friend: —

"Voltaire made me a little visit. I drove him out, because my room is very chilly, and he had a very bad cold. To drive out Voltaire! Ah, *Dieu!* you find that a very strong expression, and so it is; but it is thus that we become familiar with great men when we live with them. Then came in the lord of the castle (not yet gone to Brussels), who bored me pitilessly for two hours and a half. At last, Voltaire, half

an hour before supper, got me away by sending me a message that, since I was unwilling he should remain in my chamber, I should take the trouble of going down to his. I did not hold out against this invitation, and I descended at once. I had only seen his rooms in passing, but now he made me admire them, and I will give you a description of them.

"His little wing is so close to the château that the door of it is at the bottom of the grand staircase. There is, first, a small antechamber, as large as your hand; then comes his bedroom, which is small, low, and hung with crimson velvet, with an alcove (for the bed) of the same, set off with gold fringe. That is the furniture for winter. There is little tapestry in his rooms, but a great deal of wainscoting, in which are framed some charming pictures. There are mirrors, brackets of admirable enamel, porcelains, a clock sustained by grotesque figures; a world of things of that nature, costly, rare, and, above all, so spotlessly clean that you could kiss the floor. There is an open case containing a service of silver; there is everything which the *superflu, chose si nécessaire*, has been able to devise. And what silver! what workmanship! There is a casket containing twelve rings of cut stone, besides two of diamonds. From this room we pass into the little hall, which is not more than thirty or forty feet in length. Between the windows are two extremely beautiful statuettes upon pedestals of Indian lacquer: one is the Venus Farnese, the other Hercules. The other side of the windows is occupied by two cases: one for books, and one for the apparatus. Between the two cases there is a stove in the wall, which renders the air like that of spring. In front of the stove is a large pedestal, upon which there is a Cupid of some magnitude who is discharging an arrow, — an unfinished work, for they are making a sculptured niche for that Cupid which will conceal the stove entirely. The following is the inscription below this Cupid: —

'Whoe'er thou art, thy master he,
He is, or was, or ought to be.'

"The gallery is wainscoted and varnished light yellow. Clocks, tables, bureaus, — I need not say that nothing of that kind is wanting. Beyond is the dark chamber, which is not yet finished; nor is the one completed where he intends to put his apparatus; and this is the reason why it is all now in the hall. There is but a single sofa, and no commodious arm-chairs; I mean that the few which are there are good, but there are no stuffed arm-chairs, — bodily ease not being his luxury, as it seems. The panels of the wainscot are of India paper, extremely beautiful; the screens are of the same. There are writing-tables, porcelains, and all in a taste extremely elegant. There is one door which opens into the garden, and outside of the door is a very

pretty grotto. You will be very glad, I think, to have an idea of the temple of your idol, since you cannot see it."

On the following day the guest had an opportunity to examine the rooms of Madame du Châtelet, which astonished her exceedingly.

"To-day I came down at eleven o'clock for coffee, which is taken in the new hall. Voltaire was in his dressing-gown, but he has a very bad cold. We did not go to mass, for it is not a fête day here. They spoke of the eternal lawsuit during the whole breakfast, which lasted an hour and a half. Voltaire began to write, and we — the lady of the castle and myself — went into her part of the château to see it, because I had not yet examined it. Voltaire's rooms are nothing in comparison with hers. Her bedroom is wainscoted in light yellow, and varnished with light blue mouldings; an alcove for the bed of the same, lined with charming paper of India. The bed is of watered blue silk, and the whole is so assorted that, even to the basket for her dog, all is yellow and blue; the wood of the arm-chairs, also, the desk, bureau, and brackets. The mirrors and their silver frames are of an admirable brilliancy. A great door of plate-glass opens into the library, which is not yet finished. The carving is as fine as that of a snuff-box; nothing can be prettier than the whole effect. There are to be mirrors in this room, and pictures by Paul Veronese and others. On one side of the alcove for the bed is a little boudoir, so exquisite that, on entering it, one is ready to fall upon one's knees. The walls of this boudoir are blue, and the ceiling was painted and varnished by a pupil of Martin, who has been here three years. All the small panels are filled with pictures by Watteau: the Five Senses, the Two Tales of La Fontaine, the Kiss Taken and Returned, of which I have the two engravings, and Brother Philip's Geese. Ah, what pictures! The frames are gilt and filigree. I saw there also the Three Graces, as beautiful and lovely as the mother of the tender Cupids. There is a fire-place with brackets by Martin, with some pretty things upon them, among others an amber writing-desk, which the Prince of Prussia sent her with some verses. The only furniture is a large arm-chair stuffed in white taffeta, and two stools to match; for, thanks be to God, I have not seen one couch in all the house. This divine boudoir has a single window, which looks out upon a charming terrace and an admirable view. On the other side of the alcove is a *garde robe*, divine, paved with marble, wainscoted in linen-gray, with the prettiest engravings. Indeed, the very muslin curtains of the windows are bordered with exquisite taste. No; there is nothing in the world so pretty!

"After having examined the rooms we remained in her chamber.

She then related to me the history of that lawsuit of hers, from its origin, about eighty years ago, down to the present day. This little conversation lasted more than an hour and a half, and, strange to say, it did not fatigue me. That, however, was natural enough; she talks so well that *ennui* has not time to get a hearing. She also showed me her jewel-case, which is more beautiful than that of Madame de Richelieu. I do not cease wondering at it, for when she was at Craon she had only one shell snuff-box; now she has fifteen or twenty of gold and precious stones, as well as some of enamel and enameled gold, a new mode, which must be of very high price; as many *navettes* of the same kind, each more magnificent than the rest; watches of jasper adorned with diamonds; some elegant boxes, immense things. She has also rings of rare stones, and trinkets without end and of all kinds. In fact, I still wonder at it, for her family has never been rich."

Madame de Grafigny's own room was in dismal contrast to these splendors: —

"But you must know what sort of a chamber I have. In height and size it is a hall, where all the winds disport, entering by a thousand crevices around the window, which I will have stopped if God gives me life. This immense room has but a single window, cut into three, according to the ancient fashion, having no protection except six shutters. The wainscoting, which is whitish, lessens a little the gloom of the apartment, dim from the little light that enters it, and the narrowness of the view; for an arid mountain, which I could almost touch with my hand, masks it completely. At the foot of this mountain is a little meadow, perhaps fifty feet wide, upon which a little stream is seen creeping with a thousand turns. The tapestry is of grand personages unknown to me, and ugly enough. There is an alcove hung with very rich cloths, but unpleasing to the sight through their ill-assorted colors. As to the fire-place, there is nothing to say of it; it is of such dimensions that all the *sabat* could be within range at the same moment. We burn in it about half a cord of wood every day, without in the least mollifying the air of the room. . . . . Indeed, except the apartments of the lady and Voltaire, the château is dirty enough to disgust one. From the window, the gardens appear to be beautiful."

The guest had not been long at Cirey before she witnessed a tiff between the lovers: —

"About four in the afternoon, as I was reading, I was sent for to come down-stairs. I found the lady, who was going to bed, as she was not quite well. She said to me that, as she could not work, Vol

taire was going to read us his tragedy of 'Mérope.' Voltaire arrives. The lady takes a fancy to make him put on another coat. The one he had on, it is true, was not very nice, but it was well powdered, and had upon it fine lace. He gave her many good reasons for not changing it, as, that it would give him a chill, and that he would catch cold for nothing. At last, he was obliging enough to send for his *valet de chambre*, that he might get him another coat. The valet, at the moment, could not be found, and Voltaire believed that the subject would be dropped. Not at all; the persecution recommenced. Vivacity seizes Voltaire; he speaks to her warmly in English, and leaves the room. Madame sends, a moment after, to call him back. He replies that he has the colic, and behold 'Mérope' at the devil. I was furious. The lady begged me to read aloud the dialogues of M. Algarotti. I read and laughed, as in the morning. At length, a gentleman of the neighborhood came in, whereupon I rose, saying that I was going to see Voltaire. The lady told me to try and bring him back. I found him with the lady who is staying here [Madame Champbonin], who, I may remark, seems to me to be in his confidence. He was in the best humor, having forgotten that he had the colic. We had already talked a little while, when the lady of the château sent to call us. At length he went back to her; and this man, who had just been laughing with us, resumed his ill-humor on reëntering her chamber, under the pretext of the colic. He put himself into a corner, and said not a word. Some time after, the neighbor went out, upon which the pouters spoke to one another in English, and, a minute after, 'Mérope' appeared upon the scene. This is the first sign of love that I have observed; for they behave with an admirable decency. *But she renders his life a little hard* [*un peu dure*].[1]

"I send you this long detail in order that you may understand how they are together. At last, he read two acts of 'Mérope.' I shed tears at the first. . . . . After the reading we discussed the piece — the lady and I — until supper-time. She does not like it, and turns it into ridicule as much as she can; which little pleases poor Voltaire, who was like a patient, not daring to join in our discussion. . . . . The author was so afraid of another quarrel that the little which he said was against me. The supper was like a supper of Lunéville; we beat our sides for something to say, and no one said a word. After supper we looked at the globe, — Voltaire, the fat lady, and myself; for the lovely nymph spoke not, pretending to be asleep.

"Voltaire is always charming, and also always occupied with my amusement. His attention is unwearying, and it is evident that he is fearful of my becoming bored. He is much mistaken. To be bored

[1] All the italics in these extracts are those of Madame de Grafigny.

near Voltaire! Ah, *Dieu!* that is not possible; I have not even the leisure to think that there is such a thing as *ennui* in the world. I have the health of a fish-woman, and wake as easily as a mouse. Is it because I eat less, or because my mind is so vividly and agreeably acted upon? . . . . It is a pleasure for me to laugh inwardly at their fanaticism for Newton, and to hear people of the best understanding utter imbecilities [*des bêtises*] dictated by prejudice. I do not dispute, as you may believe, but I get my profit from it in a knowledge of the human mind."

Madame continued daily to record incidents and traits. I add a few paragraphs: —

"After breakfast, the goddess of these haunts took it into her head to have a ride in her *calèche*. I cared little to go, on account of her horses, which are like ill-governed children. At length, I was so much pressed that I consented to go. But, *ma foi!* when I saw the gambols of those *messieurs* I could not muster the courage to get into the carriage. Nevertheless, I should have been obliged to get in but for the humane Voltaire, who said that it was ridiculous to force obliging people to take pleasures which for them were pains. Adorable words, were they not? So I remained at home with our lady guest, who is as idle as I. We had a walk together, and then she took me to see the bath-rooms. Ah, what an enchanting place! The antechamber is of the size of your bed; the bath-room itself is entirely lined with porcelain tiles, except the pavement, which is marble. Then there is a dressing-room of the same size, the wainscoting of which is enameled with a clear, brilliant sea-green, gay, divine, admirably carved and gilt; furniture to match, — a little sofa, charming little arm-chairs in the same style, all carved and gilt; brackets, porcelains, engravings, pictures, and a toilet-table; the ceiling painted; the chamber rich, and equal to the cabinet in all respects, with mirrors, and amusing books upon enameled tables. Everything seemed to be made for the people of Lilliput. No; there is nothing there so pretty, so delicious, and so enchanting as this place. If I had a suite of apartments like that, I would have myself roused in the middle of the night to see it. The fire-place is not larger than an ordinary arm-chair, but it is a jewel to put in your pocket. . . . . After supper Voltaire gave us the magic lantern, accompanying the exhibition with words to make you die of laughter. He exhibited all the circle of the Duke de Richelieu, the history of the Abbé Desfontaines, and all sorts of tales, always in the manner of a Savoyard. No; there was never anything so funny!"

"Yesterday at supper Voltaire was of a charming gayety. He told us some stories which are not good except from his mouth. He told

me some anecdotes of Boileau that are not in print. There were some impromptu verses, also, which I will send you if he will dictate them to me. I leave you to imagine the pleasure there is in living with such people. But wait; I still have something to say to you. This morning the lady of the house read us a geometrical calculation of an English dreamer, who pretends to demonstrate that the inhabitants of Jupiter are of the same height as King G., (*sic*) of whom the Scripture speaks. The book was in Latin, and she read it to us in French. She hesitated a moment at each period, and I supposed that it was to understand the calculations, which are given at length in the book. But no; she translated easily the mathematical terms; the numbers, the extravagances, nothing stopped her. Is not that really astonishing?"

The Abbé de Breteuil, a brother of Madame du Châtelet, passed nine days at the château, and during his stay there were gay doings. This gentleman was a genuine abbé of the period, having nothing of the ecclesiastic except his title and revenue. Gay were the suppers now, for the abbé had a true churchman's stock of stories of the untranslatable kind, which drew from Voltaire his ample quota; and, between them, they made Madame de Grafigny laugh "to split her spleen," as she remarked. She gives some specimens of these comic tales, which serve to show that neither sex, nor profession, nor rank, was a restraint upon the license of the tongue in those good old times of the *régime*. They were such stories as a party of young fellows might be supposed to tell in the last hour of a convivial party, innocent enough, but not repeatable. Now, too, "La Pucelle" was brought out from Madame du Châtelet's desk, and the author read a canto or two almost every night to the abbé and the ladies, much to the delight of Madame de Grafigny, who wrote an outline of each canto for the amusement of her correspondent; and he, in his turn, was infinitely entertained by them. "The canto of Jeanne [he wrote, in one of his replies] is charming." Madame de Grafigny gives the routine of a day during the abbé's stay at the château: —

"Between half past ten and half past one, they summon every one to coffee, which is taken in Voltaire's hall. The meal usually lasts an hour, more or less. Precisely at noon, the people who are called here the coachmen go to dinner. These coachmen are *the lora of the castle, the fat lady, and her son;* the latter never appearing

except when there is something to be copied. After coffee, we — that is to say, Voltaire, madame, and myself — remain half an hour. Then he makes us a low bow, and tells us to go away; upon which we return to our rooms. Toward four o'clock, sometimes, we take a slight repast. At nine we sup, and remain together till midnight. *Dieu!* what suppers! They are always the suppers of Damocles. All the pleasures are in attendance; but, alas, how short is the time! Oh, *mon Dieu!* Nothing is wanting to them, not even the Damocles sword, which is represented by the swift flight of time. The lord of the castle takes his place at the table, does not eat, falls asleep, consequently says not a word, and goes out with the tray. . . . . Yesterday, after supper, there was a charming scene. Voltaire had the pouts on account of a glass of Rhine wine which madame prevented his drinking; he would not read Jeanne, as he had promised, being in an extremely bad humor. The brother and myself, by force of pleasantries, succeeded at last in restoring him. The lady, who was also pouting, was unable to keep it up. All this made a scene of delicious jests, which lasted a long time, finishing with a canto of Jeanne, which was no better than that scene."

More serious readings were given sometimes, such as Voltaire's "Epistles upon Man;" but, as these poems contained passages reflecting more or less openly upon Rousseau and Desfontaines, they were occasionally accompanied by explosions of what the French politely call "vivacity." Madame du Châtelet remarked, one morning at breakfast, that, in the Epistle upon Envy, which the poet had just read, there was too much about Rousseau. "If he were dead [said Voltaire], I would have him dug up to hang him." Madame de Grafigny deplored his "fanaticism" with regard to these two men. "I have just come [she writes] from a terrible conversation upon them, in which we tried to persuade him to despise them. Oh, human weakness! He has neither rhyme nor reason when he speaks of them. It is he who has the engravings (caricatures of them) made, and he who composes the verses underneath. What weakness! And what ridicule it will bring upon him! Really my heart bleeds at it, for I love him; yes, I love him; he has so many good qualities that it is a pity to see in him such miserable foibles. . . . . He never hears a good action spoken of without emotion."

Indeed, madame praises warmly the amiable qualities of Voltaire, particularly his singular patience in sickness, his

gratitude for attentions paid him when he was sick, his tender sympathy with her when she told him the terrible details of her miserable marriage, his frequent generosities, his thoughtful and laborious care for the guests of the house. To entertain the abbé the theatre was reopened, and such was Voltaire's zeal that in one day and night he made his company of volunteers rehearse and perform thirty-three acts of tragedy, opera, and comedy. The housekeeping was on a very liberal scale; thirty-six fires blazed in the château, requiring six cords of wood every day. Madame de Grafigny relates a kitchen anecdote: —

"Eight days ago, a female servant broke an earthen pot over the head of a lackey of Voltaire, which kept him in bed till yesterday. They dismissed the girl, and kept back a crown from her wages, which they gave to the lackey. At breakfast, yesterday, your idol's valet mentioned that the lackey had given back the crown to the servant. 'Bring him here,' said Voltaire. 'Why did you give back the crown?' 'Eh-eh-eh, monsieur' (for he is a booby), 'it was because I am almost well, and the girl is sorry for having hurt me.' 'Céran (that is the valet's name), give a crown to this queer fellow for the one he gave back; and another one to teach him what good actions deserve. Go, go, my lad; you are very fortunate in knowing how to behave. Always behave well.'"

After the departure of the abbé, the gayeties came to an end, and the two personages of the château settled to their work once more, laboring with ceaseless impetuosity; Voltaire growing ever more restive under the envenomed attacks of his enemies in Paris.

"Madame spends almost every night in work, even until five and seven in the morning. She makes the stout lady's son, who is a good Israelite, stay in her room copying her works, of which he does not understand a word. You think, perhaps, that she must sleep until three in the afternoon. Not at all; she gets up at nine or ten in the morning; and even rises at six when she goes to bed at four, which she calls going to bed at cock-crow. In short, she sleeps but two hours a day, and, in the course of the twenty-four hours, only leaves her desk for breakfast, which lasts an hour, and for supper, and an hour after. Sometimes she eats a morsel at five o'clock in the afternoon, but at her desk, and very rarely. On the other hand, when Voltaire takes a fancy to leave his work for half a quarter of an hour, to pay a visit to me and the stout lady, he does not sit down, and

says, 'It is frightful, the time we lose in talking; we ought not to lose a minute; the greatest waste we can make is that of time.' This is his daily remark. We come to supper while he is still at his desk; we have half done supper when he leaves it; and we have to use force to keep him from going back as soon as he leaves the table. He beats his sides [*il se bat les flancs*] to tell us some stories during the repast; and we perceive that it is from pure politeness, for his spirit is far away. . . . . Voltaire is the unhappiest man in the world. He knows his value, and approbation is almost indifferent to him; but for that very reason one word of his adversaries reduces him to what we call despair. It is the only thing that occupies him, and it drowns him in bitterness. I cannot give you an idea of this folly, except in telling you that it is more powerful and more wretched than his mind is great and broad. . . . . He drugs himself without ceasing. He has got it into his head that he must not eat. Judge of the happiness of these people whom we supposed to have attained supreme felicity! I should like to be able to tell you all that I think of it, but between the tree and the bark one must not put a finger."

Unhappily, Madame de Grafigny, prudent as she meant to be, *did* get her finger between the tree and the bark. In the innocence of her heart, overflowing with admiration for the genius of Voltaire, she was accustomed to copy portions of his "Louis XIV." and give outlines of cantos of "La Pucelle," in her letters to her friend, evidently thinking only to gratify a warm lover of the author. Madame du Châtelet, following the example of her king, opened the letters that came to and left the château. Madame de Grafigny, discovering this, became cautious as to what she said, and used feigned names for the persons mentioned in her letters. But, one day, the lady of the château read in a letter from Lunéville to her guest the fatal words given above, "*The canto of Jeanne is charming.*" She jumped to the conclusion that Madame de Grafigny had copied a canto and sent it to her friend. Terrified and indignant, she flew to Voltaire, who was sick, sore, and exasperated from his warfare with enemies in Paris. Awful scenes followed. The tempest broke upon the poor lady after one of those suppers which had usually been so merry and delicious.

"The 29th of December, on the arrival of the post, they told me there were no letters for me. Supper passed as usual, without much conversation, and without my observing anything which could give me warning of the storm they were preparing for me. Supper over

I withdrew quietly to my room to seal a letter which I had written to you. Half an hour after, I saw coming in you will easily guess whom. I was extremely surprised, for he never came into my apartment; but much more astonished was I when he said to me: 'I am lost! My life is in your hands!' 'Oh, *mon Dieu!* How is that?' said I. 'How is that?' he cried. 'It is that a hundred copies are in circulation of the canto of Jeanne. This instant I fly! I seek refuge in Holland, at the end of the world, — I don't know where. M. du Châtelet starts for Lunéville. You must write at once to Panpan [M. Deveaux, her friend] to secure his assistance in getting back all those copies. Is he honest man enough to do it?' I assured him, with the utmost sincerity, that you would render all the services in your power. 'Very well, then,' said he, 'write quick, and earnestly.' 'I will do so!' I exclaimed. 'I am delighted to seize this opportunity to show you all my zeal.' Nevertheless, I told him how much it afflicted me that such a thing should happen while I was here.

"At this he rose, furious, and said to me: 'No prevarication, madame! It is you who sent the copy.' At these words I fell from the clouds. I assured him that I had never read nor written a single verse of it. He insisted, nevertheless, that it was you who distributed the copies, and that *you* had said I had sent the canto to you. Upon hearing this, I saw, like a flash, that some one of the hundred thousand persons to whom he has shown this poem had kept a canto, and that it was circulating, while I was here without my being able to clear myself of suspicion. Alas! a circumstance so distressing drove me to despair. I repeated, with the accent of truth, but always with a deafening vivacity, that it was not I. He declared, in his turn, that you had read the canto to Desmarets, at a lady's house; that you were giving copies of it to everybody; and that Madame du Châtelet had the proof of it in her pocket.

"What could I say? Oh, my friend, I was in utter consternation. You will perceive that I understood nothing of all this, and that it was impossible I should; but not the less frightened was I on that account. At last, he said to me, 'Come, come, write and tell him to send you back the original and the copies.' I began to write; and as I could not ask you to return what I had not sent you, I begged you to inform yourself of what had happened, and to communicate to me whatever you might learn. He read my letter, and, throwing it back to me, he exclaimed, 'Oh, fie, madame! You should be sincere when the very life of a poor unfortunate like me is in danger.'

"The more I talked, the less I convinced him. I was silent. This frightful scene lasted at least an hour; but it was nothing to what was coming; it was reserved for the lady to put the climax to it. She

came into my room like a fury, screaming with passion and repeating almost the same things, while I still kept silence. Then she drew a letter from her pocket, and, almost thrusting it into my face, cried out, 'See, see the proof of your infamy! You are the most unworthy of creatures! You are a monster, whom I took into my house, not from friendship, for I had none for you, but because you knew not where else to go; and you have had the infamy to betray me, to assassinate me, to steal from my desk a work for the purpose of copying it!'

"Ah, my poor friend, where were you? The thunder-bolt which falls at the feet of the solitary traveler overwhelms him less than these words overwhelmed me. This is all I can recollect of the torrent of insults which she uttered; for I was so distracted that I soon ceased to hear and understand her. But she said much more, and unless Voltaire had restrained her she would have boxed my ears. To all that she said I only replied, 'Oh, be silent, madame; I am too unhappy for you to treat me so unworthily!'

"At these words Voltaire seized her round the waist, and snatched her away from me; for she said all this right in my teeth, and with such violent gestures that at every moment I expected she would strike me. When she had been removed, she strode up and down the room, uttering loud exclamations upon my infamy. Observe, all this was uttered in so loud a voice that Dubois [maid of Madame Grafigny], who was two rooms off, heard every word. For my part, I was long without the power to pronounce a syllable; I was neither dead nor alive.

"At last, I asked to see the letter. She told me I should not have it. 'At least,' said I, 'show me what there is in it so decisive against me.' She did so, and I saw this unfortunate phrase: '*The canto of Jeanne is charming.*' Instantly that gave me the secret of this scene, which I had not before thought of. I at once gave them the explanation, and told them what I had written to you of the impression which the canto had made upon me when I had heard it read. To his credit I say it, Voltaire believed me at once, and immediately asked my forgiveness.

"The affair was then explained to me as it had appeared to *them*. He told me that you had read my letter to Desmarets in the hearing of a man who had written an account of it to M. du Châtelet; and that, upon reading that letter, they had opened yours to me, which had confirmed them in their error. This scene lasted until five o'clock in the morning.

"Megæra [madame] was slow to give in. Poor Voltaire talked to her a long time in English without making any impression upon her

then he teased her to make her say that she believed my story, and that she was sorry for what she had said to me. They made me write and ask you to send me back my letter, in order that I might justify myself entirely. I wrote with extreme pain ; I gave them my letter, and they went away ; but I did not cease to tremble until they had been gone for a long time.

"In the midst of the uproar, the stout lady (Madame de Champbonin) entered, but immediately went out, and I did not see her again until they had been gone an hour. She found me vomiting, and in a frightful state ; for reflection only redoubled my grief. She went down-stairs again, and, a moment after, brought me back the letter I had written, saying that they believed me upon my word alone, and that it was useless to write. *Dieu!* in what a condition I was ! Until noon I was in perfect despair, and you will not be surprised at it if you realize the situation in which I was, — without a home, without money, and insulted in a house which I could not leave. Madame de —— was at Commercy, and I had not a single *sou* to pay my expenses to the next village, where I should have slept better upon straw than in a chamber which I could not look upon again without horror. What was to become of me, O my Panpan? The good stout lady was the only one who had shown me any humanity ; but, as she believed still that I had copied that cursed canto, and as she is strongly attached to the family, she gave me but cold consolation.

"At last, about noon, the good Voltaire came in. He was moved even to tears at my condition. He made me the most emphatic excuses. Many times he asked my forgiveness, and I had an opportunity to see all the tenderness of his heart. He made me give him my word of honor that I would not ask the return of the fatal letter, and I gave it to him.

"At five o'clock in the evening M. du Châtelet came in with a contrite air, and said to me, gently, that he advised me to send for my letter ; not that they did not believe my word, but just to confound them. I objected that I had given my word not to do it, and that I was afraid, since I did not doubt that my letters were opened, that they would take it ill if I broke my promise. Nevertheless he insisted so strongly, and so well persuaded me that my letter should not be opened, that at last I promised him I would write. It required a whole hour of reflection for me to see through the trick ; for I had no more the faculty of thinking. I passed three days and three nights in tears.

"Ah ! I forgot to say that the same evening, about eight o'clock, Megæra came with all her train, and, after a formal courtesy, said, in a very dry tone, 'Madame, I am sorry for what passed last night.'

And then she spoke of other things with the fat lady and her husband, as tranquilly as people speak when they rise in the morning."

For three weeks Madame de Grafigny was prostrate, or, as she expressed it, "in hell," always sick, and not leaving her room till nine in the evening. At length the letter arrived in which she had described the canto, which made her innocence manifest. Even then Madame du Châtelet was cold and formal, not being able to forgive herself for her violence. Voltaire was all contrition and assiduity.

"More than once he shed tears on seeing me so ill, never entering my chamber without making me the most humble and pathetic excuses, and redoubling his care that I should want nothing. Often he went so far as to say that madame was a terrible woman, who had no flexibility in her heart, although she had a good heart."

Gradually, life at the château resumed its usual train; even Megæra relented, and there was an approach to the former gayety and ease. The guest appears to have remained at Cirey about three months, not six, as the title-page of her letters imports. She contrived in the spring of 1739 to get away to Paris, where she lived the rest of her life upon a small pension from the Austrian court, increased at a later day by the profits of her works. Voltaire remained to the end of her life her affectionate friend and correspondent, congratulating her upon her literary successes, and giving her the aid which an established author can give to one beginning a career.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE ABBÉ DESFONTAINES.

NOTHING that Madame de Grafigny observed at Cirey surprised her so much as Voltaire's sensitiveness to the attacks of a hostile press. The mere mention of the editor Desfontaines or of the poet J. B. Rousseau was enough sometimes to put him in a passion. One evening in February, 1739, as she records, they were going to play a comedy at the château; the guests were assembled and the actors were ready, when the mail arrived, bringing him some disagreeable letters. "He uttered frightful cries, and fell into a kind of convulsions. Madame du Châtelet at length came into my room, with tears in her eyes as big as her fist, and begged me not to perform. The curtain did not rise. Yesterday he had some good intervals, and we played. *Mon Dieu!* what a donkey [*bête*] he is, — he who has so much intellect!"

Madame de Grafigny, like many other guests, did not penetrate the secret of the house she inhabited. She was very far from knowing what was the matter with the inmates of the château, and naturally surmised it to be some new offense committed against a too susceptible author of weak digestion by a robust, unscrupulous critic. This may well have seemed to her a trifling cause of effects so dire; for of all the ills we see others suffer, there are few which we bear with more composure than their abuse by the press. We are amazed that they should take it seriously. Nevertheless, when it is our turn to roast, we do not find the process agreeable; and no people feel so acutely the anguish inflicted by the pen as those whose profession it is to use that instrument of torture.

Voltaire had particular reasons for resenting the Abbé Desfontaines's faint praise and covert satire. It was not his clerical garb and title; for he had resigned a small country benefice in order to devote himself to literature, and was now

only an abbé in title. Piron, probably, had the true reason in mind when he made his well-known retort. Desfontaines, seeing Piron enter the Café Procope, very handsomely dressed, said to him, "M. Piron, does such a coat as this become a poet?" To which Piron replied, "Does such a man as this become such a coat?"

In 1724, when Desfontaines was a writer for such literary journals as there were then in Paris, he was introduced by Thieriot to Voltaire, who was polite to him, and alluded to him in a friendly tone in his letters. A few weeks after this introduction, the abbé was arrested on an unnamable charge; a boy chimney-sweep the alleged victim. The crime, in the severe code of that age, was punishable by burning alive; and as several cases had lately been reported, it was thought that an example was needed. The officers of the law were preparing the indictment, when the abbé wrote to Voltaire informing him of his danger. It was at the time of the poet's brief favor with Madame de Prie, mistress of the Duke de Bourbon, prime minister. He flew to Fontainebleau, and, using all that zeal and tact which he was wont to use when a friend needed his aid, he procured an order for the discharge of the prisoner on the simple condition of his leaving Paris. The abbé left Paris, and Voltaire again interposed in his behalf, endeavoring to get permission for his return. He spoke to M. de Fleury on the subject, found him prejudiced against the accused, but succeeded, after further efforts, in obtaining the remission of his exile, and the abbé resumed his vocation in Paris.

The letter in which he poured forth his gratitude to Voltaire has been preserved. "I shall never forget, monsieur," it began, "the infinite obligations I am under to you. Your good heart is far above even your genius; and you are the truest friend that ever existed. The zeal with which you have served me does me, in some sort, more honor than the malice and depravity of my enemies have given me of affront." [1]

Whether Desfontaines was guilty or innocent of the offense charged cannot be known, because his case was never tried. Nor does his avoiding a trial imply guilt. Men who could bring such an accusation against a writer in revenge for satirical or abusive paragraphs would not stick at making or

[1] 1 Œuvres de Voltaire, 255.

buying testimony, and the most innocent person in that age and country might shrink from a trial involving such painful possibilities. He told Voltaire, in the letter just quoted, that he had a plan of a defense in his mind which he thought would be "beautiful and curious," and which he was going to work out in the country; for it would not become him to be silent "under so execrable an affront." This defense, however, never appeared. One thing only is certain: Voltaire rendered Desfontaines a very great service.

Time passed. Voltaire spent his three years in England, returned, and continued his brilliant career. Desfontaines, after working upon and conducting various journals, established, in 1735, a literary weekly, which he called "Observations sur tous les Ouvrages Nouveaux," in which he displayed no more than the usual perversity of ancient critics. At present a book sent to the critical periodicals for review is usually assigned to reviewers specially qualified; but in that period the conductor was man-of-all-work, and felt himself obliged to assume an editorial superiority on every subject and in every kind of literature. Thus, Desfontaines, when Newton became a topic of general interest in France, knowing nothing of Newton but what he had read in Voltaire's English Letters, treated the new philosophy with contemptuous freedom. "Newtonism," said he, "is bad science, reprobated by all the good philosophers of Europe. . . . . Newton was no philosopher; only a geometer, an observer, a calculator. Such terms as *vacuum*, *absolute gravitation*, *attraction of gravitation*, are the contemptible jargon of peripateticism, — a jargon long ago despised and proscribed in all the schools of Europe." [1]

Although this was the fashionable tone in France, in 1735, upon the Newtonian philosophy, the sentences quoted were doubtless aimed at the man who had plucked the writer of them as a brand from the burning in 1724.

Desfontaines, in fact, soon forgot his obligations to his deliverer. He took offense, as it seems, from a trifling cause. Having published a French translation of Voltaire's English Essay upon Epic Poetry, the author of that work found it so swarming with errors that he translated it anew himself, and

[1] 2 L'Esprit de l'Abbé Desfontaines, 62.

published it, as it were, in opposition to Desfontaines's translation. One mistake of the abbé's made a good deal of sport at the time. The English word *cakes* baffled him, and he concluded it to be an English form of Cacus, the Latin name of Vulcan's robber son. Voltaire, it seems, wrote, "the cakes eaten by the Trojans," which the learned abbé translated, *la faim devorante de Cacus*. Desfontaines, from this time, we are told, held his obligations to Voltaire annulled, and treated him in his journals with no particular consideration. He commended some of his tragedies, damned his "Charles XII." with the faintest praise and sly insinuation, criticised "La Henriade" with freedom, and, in general, wrote of his works without favor but with no very noticeable severity. Voltaire did not enjoy the perusal of the "Observations." He thought them arrogant, ignorant, and tasteless. He laughed when Desfontaines, who still plumed himself upon his English, styled Bishop Berkeley's "Alciphron" a *defense* of atheism. "I repent," he wrote to Cideville in 1735, "having saved Desfontaines. After all, it is better to burn a priest than to bore the public. If I had left him to cook, I should have spared the public many imbecilities."

Personal ill-will grew between them. Voltaire, with some reason, suspected Desfontaines of writing bookseller Jore's attack, — a piece done evidently by a practiced hand. He thought, too, that the abbé was in league with detested Rousseau, traitor to the freedom of utterance, with whom Voltaire was at open war. Desfontaines knew no moderation when Rousseau was to be extolled, and he praised him in terms that seemed designed to meet Voltaire's censure. Voltaire, for example, liked to remind the public that Rousseau was a *mere* poet, and a poet who excelled only in one or two kinds. Desfontaines began an eulogium by remarking that Rousseau was "a great master in all the kinds and in all the styles;" as admirable in his theory of the poetic art as in the poems by which he illustrated it. Voltaire reflected upon Rousseau's family, his father having been an excellent shoemaker and a good citizen. Desfontaines wrote, "Every man of letters who becomes distinguished, every celebrated author, is a nobleman." Rousseau, he added, was of illustrious origin, — a descendant of Homer, Virgil, Pindar, and Horace; nay, a son of Apollo and Calliope.

This was a good and fair retort. His notice of Voltaire's Newton was extremely exasperating, and was obviously meant to be so.

"To have [said he] a sovereign contempt for the scientific system that has dazzled M. de Voltaire, it is only necessary to recall one's mind to the great principles of clear ideas [*aux grands principes des idées claires.*] Happily, there are in his book many other things not connected with that bad system, to which we cannot refuse our esteem, such as the observations of Newton and other scientific men and astronomers upon light and color. These, however, were long ago known and adopted in France, and they are taught in the schools. M. de Voltaire has, nevertheless, the glory of having compiled them with care, and of having published them in French. If he has fallen into some mistakes, persons who are versed in those elevated subjects easily perceive his errors."

Every sentence of this was barbed and poisoned for a susceptible author living a hundred and fifty miles off, and laboring under the conviction that this perverse and ignorant editor was "the oracle of the provinces," and whose journal actually had a large circulation. Worse offenses increased the ill-feeling between them. Desfontaines published a private letter addressed to him by Voltaire, asking him to state, "in two lines," that the edition of his "Julius Cæsar," just out, was not published with the author's consent, and abounded in errors and alterations Desfontaines, who had already written his review of the play, simply added to it this letter, much to the writer's disgust. There was a partial reconciliation between them, Voltaire being morbidly and excessively desirous to propitiate a man who, as it seemed to him, was lessening his hold upon the public, and giving courage to the powers who issued *lettres de cachet.* The favor of the public was his only safety. The most sensualized noble, the narrowest ecclesiastic, the meanest informer, had some feeling of the dangerous ridicule of molesting a man who was "shedding glory upon the king's reign;" for, under every form of government, in every degree and kind of civilization, the power that finally rules and sways, the king of kings and lord of lords, is Public Opinion. Voltaire was fighting for freedom of thought and utterance in Europe. He was fighting Rousseau's battle and Desfontaines's battle. His detestation of

those men was therefore a blending of all the ingredients of animosity, public and private, noble and personal.

The truce was broken by a foul blow on the part of the editor. The young and generous Count Algarotti, before starting upon his expedition to the polar seas, had spent a few days at Cirey, where Voltaire had addressed to him, on his departure, some pretty verses, which were, for many reasons, unfit for publication.

"Go," said the poet, "and return bringing to the French people news of the pole observed and measured. I, meanwhile, will await your coming under my meridian, in the fields of Cirey, observing henceforth only the star of EMILY. Warmed by the fire of her powerful genius, ... I call to witness the heavens measured by your hands that I would not abandon her divine charms for the equator and the arctic pole."

This poem of a dozen lines having, by some chance, fallen into the hands of Desfontaines, he wrote to the author, asking permission to insert it in his journal! We can imagine the consternation of the inmates of the château at the thought of such an indecorous promulgation of a secret known to Europe. All three of the persons interested — Voltaire, the Marquis du Châtelet, and madame — united in an earnest protest against its publication. Nevertheless, he published it.

The reader cannot desire to follow this quarrel through all its stages. Voltaire's minor poems of this period contain bitter satire of "the hireling scribe" who sold his wrath and adulation to the first comer; and the "Observations" teem with evidences of the editor's anger against his adversary. It is one of the calamitous limitations of literature that a battle, nay, a skirmish of outposts, that only lasts twenty minutes, demands, for its complete elucidation, more space than could usually be afforded to the most brilliant, the most important, the most enduring, triumph of peaceful exertion. About Waterloo there is a library; but no historian, I think, bestows two lines upon the publication, in 1624, of Lord Herbert's "De Veritate," which began deism in Europe. I have before me several hundred printed pages upon this quarrel between Voltaire and Desfontaines. Let us come at once to the crisis of the strife.

In an evil hour for his own peace and dignity, Voltaire hit upon the expedient of applying to his reviewer the reviewer's most effective trick, that of gleaning the errors from a thousand pages, and grouping them in one page. No work can stand this treatment, if it is skillfully managed. Go carefully over a book containing ten thousand things; find some typographical errors, some lapses in style, some omissions, intentional and unintentional, several unimportant and two or three important mistakes, a few sentences which, severed from their connection, can easily be made to seem absurd; group all that with the tact of "an old hand," and you can make a review of a very good book that will cause provincial readers to pity the author, and wonder it should be considered safe to let him go loose. Voltaire took two hundred numbers of Desfontaines's weekly, subjected them to this familiar process, and published the result in a pamphlet, entitled "The Preservative" (Le Préservatif), a copy of which, as we have seen, he handed to Madame de Grafigny to read. This pamphlet of forty small pages bore the name in the title-page of the Chevalier de Mouhi, one of several poor fellows who hung about the office of the Abbé Moussinot to get an occasional louis d'or from Voltaire's charity.

It was not a difficult task to compose an effective pamphlet of this kind, for Desfontaines's ignorance of science was that of a French abbé of 1735, and, in literary matters, he made frequent slips, as all men must who write continually and on every topic. Thus, he wrote that Brutus was more a *Quaker* than a Stoic. "It is," remarked Voltaire, "as if he had said Brutus was more a Capuchin than a Stoic." A wonderful statement of the editor was that Seneca was a more *verbose* writer than Cicero. He had made, too, some ludicrous mistranslations from Latin, Italian, and English; he had displayed a singular and inveterate ignorance of Newton whenever he mentioned or alluded to him. Voltaire selected about fifty of his mistakes and misconceptions, appending to each a sentence or two of quiet satire; all tending to show "how *amusing* it was that such a man should take it into his head to sit in judgment upon others."

But this was not the sting of "Le Préservatif." Toward the close of his pamphlet, Voltaire made his Chevalier de Mouhi proceed thus: —

"Having read in these 'Observations' several attacks upon M. de Voltaire, as well as a letter which the editor boasted he had received from M. de Voltaire, I took the liberty to write myself to M. de Voltaire, though not acquainted with him. Here is his reply: —

"'I only know the Abbé Guyot Desfontaines from M. Thieriot's bringing him to my house in 1724 as a man who had formerly been a Jesuit, and hence a student. I received him with friendship, as I do all who cultivate literature. I was astonished at the end of fifteen days to receive a letter from him, written at Bicêtre [prison for criminals, near Paris], to which he had just been committed. I learned that he had been put into the Châtelet [prison in Paris] three months before for the same crime of which he was then accused, and that they were preparing to try him. At that time I was so fortunate as to have some very powerful friends, of whom death has since deprived me. Sick as I was, I hurried to Fontainebleau to throw myself at their feet. I pressed, I solicited, on all sides; and, at last, obtained his release, and the discontinuance of a trial that involved a question of life or death. I also procured for him permission to retire to the country house of M. le Président de Bernières, my friend, and he went thither with M. Thieriot. Do you know what he did there? He wrote a libel against me. He even showed it to M. Thieriot, who made him throw it into the fire. He asked my pardon, saying that the libel was written a little before the time of his committal to Bicêtre. I had the weakness to forgive him, and that weakness has cost me a mortal enemy, who has written me anonymous letters, and who has sent twenty libels to Holland against me. Such, sir, are some of the things I can say concerning him.'"

This was a cutting stroke; but, as the reader observes, there is no indication in the letter of the nature of the offense for which the abbé was committed to prison. As if to supply the deficiency, the author of "Le Préservatif," while that pamphlet was passing through the press, set flying about Paris an epigram, in which the attacks of Desfontaines upon Newton were coupled with the offense of which he was accused: "He has taken everything *à rebours*, and his errors are *always* sins against nature." Still worse, he caused a caricature to be engraved and published, representing the abbé on his knees receiving ignominious punishment for his alleged crime. Under the picture was another epigram by Voltaire, not describable, ending with an assurance that "God recompenses merit."

When the matadore strikes between the horns with his slender and glittering blade, he must kill his bull on the instant, or look out for his horns. The bull will not refrain from vengeance because he is not skilled in the use of the matadore's brilliant weapon; he employs the means of offense that nature has given him, and the matadore expects nothing else. Desfontaines replied promptly to "Le Préservatif" in a pamphlet which he entitled "The Voltaire Mania [La Voltairomanie], or the Letter of a Young Advocate, in the Form of a Memorial." It was the attack of a bull blinded by rage, and Voltaire was justly punished by it for stooping either to conciliate or to assail such an adversary. The young advocate began by assuming that, in assaulting Voltaire, he was avenging outraged man.

"He has spared no one, and, like a mad dog, he has thrown himself upon all the most distinguished authors. Theologians, philosophers, poets, all the learned, have been the objects of his contempt, raillery, and banter. He has turned into ridicule religions, nations, and governments. There is no one who does not know this; and why should I not unmask the persecutor of the human race, this enemy of the living and the dead, and tear from him that assumption of infallibility in literature with which he arrogantly decorates himself?"

The "young advocate" was also the defender of an outraged individual. The Abbé Desfontaines, he remarks, is of an age and character that cause him to forgive injuries too easily, and therefore he, the young advocate, his friend, has undertaken to punish a man who has been accustomed to be paid for his follies *in another way*.

"Supposing, even, that the Abbé Desfontaines *is* such a person as he is depicted in 'Le Préservatif;' does it follow that Voltaire is an honest man and a great writer? Will all connoisseurs be the less convinced that he is absolutely ignorant of the dramatic art, and that he owes all the applause he has ever received at the theatre to the empty harmony of his pompous tirades, and to his satiric or irreligious audacity? His 'Henriade,' will it be the less a dazzling chaos, a bad tissue of fictions, stale or out of place, in which there is as much prose as verse, and more verbal faults than pages? Will not his 'Charles XII.' always pass for the work of an ignorant fool, written in the jocular taste of a common gossip retailing anecdotes? His Letters

(English), wherein he dares to carry his extravagances even to the altar, will they the less oblige him to keep out of Paris all his life? The 'Elements of Newton,' will they ever be anything else than the exercise of a school-boy who stumbles at every step, a work simply ridiculous? In a word, will Voltaire be the less a man dishonored in civilized society for his low impostures, his rascalities, his shameful basenesses, his thefts, public and private, and his presuming impertinence, which have drawn upon him hitherto such withering disgraces?"

Of these withering disgraces the young advocate appends a descriptive catalogue: "(1.) The deserved chastisement which he received at Sèvres during the regency, — a chastisement for which he deemed himself well recompensed by the thousand crowns which his avarice accepted to console his honor. (2.) The celebrated treatment at the door of the Hôtel de Sully, in consequence of which he was driven from France for the follies which that noble basting caused him to commit. (3.) Basting again at London from the hand of an English bookseller, — a grievous mishap, which made him earnestly solicit, and obtain, the favor of returning to France. Thus the same scourge that caused him to leave France made him come back, to experience several other affronts of another kind. When will he be satiated with ignominy?"

Then he came to the affair of the abbé's committal to Bicêtre: —

"Will it be believed that he who to-day brings against the Abbé Desfontaines so shameful a reproach is the self-same man who, thirteen or fourteen years ago, defended him against it, and who proved in a short memorial, drawn up by himself, the falsity and absurdity of the accusation? He did this at the solicitation of the late Président de Bernières, who good-naturedly lodged him in his house, and whom Voltaire presumed to call his friend! The Président de Bernières the *friend* of Voltaire, grandson of a peasant! The profession of man of letters is advantageous indeed. This *friend* drove him out of his house in 1726, after his insolent speech in Madame Lecouvreur's box."

He repeats that the service rendered him by Voltaire in 1724 was done in mere deference to the wishes of "a benefactor upon whom Voltaire depended," who "lodged and fed him," and who was an "ally of the Abbé Desfontaines.'

He added, in a parenthesis, "A scoundrel, by his airs of protection, compels us to speak of this circumstance." He asks whether a man standing in such a relation to the Président de Bernières could have avoided doing as Voltaire had done.

This was the more audacious from the circumstance that Madame de Bernières was still alive. But Desfontaines's masterpiece of effrontery was in his meeting the charge of having written a libel against his deliverer just after leaving Bicêtre, which libel Thieriot had seen and had made him suppress. He attempted here to make a breach between the accuser and the witness.

"M. Thieriot," continued the young advocate, "is a man as much esteemed by worthy people as Voltaire is detested by them. As if in spite of himself, he draws after him the disgraceful residue of an old tie which he has not yet had the resolution to break entirely. Now M. Thieriot, who is cited as a witness in this affair, has been asked if the statement was true, and M. Thieriot has been obliged to say that he had no knowledge of it. Here we defy Voltaire to the proof. The sojourn at the country house of the late Président de Bernières occurred in the vacation of 1725. If a libel printed in that year exists, let it be produced. If it is replied that the abbé threw it into the fire, let Voltaire name the witnesses; for assuredly he ought not to be believed upon his word. He says that M. Thieriot obliged the abbé to throw it into the fire; and here is M. Thieriot, who declares the falsity of the statement. Voltaire, then, is the most audacious, the most insensate, of liars."

The pamphlet concluded by a kind of apology for its violence: "I believe the Voltaire mania sufficiently demonstrated by what I have said. Would to God that he was only a madman! Worse than that, he is false, impudent, slanderous. Let him henceforth write what he pleases, whether prose or verse, he has been deprived, or, rather, he has deprived himself, of the least credit in the world. For the rest, however he may seem to have been maltreated here, we have been but too indulgent. . . . . And what is more likely to abase that monstrous pride of his, the radical cause of all his vices and all his infamy, than the contents of this salutary letter, which your charity will not fail to communicate to him?"

Having completed his pamphlet, the abbé was so well content with it that he read it, as an after-dinner treat, to a company of literary men at the house of the Marquis de Loc-Maria. The hearers pronounced it "a very gross libel;" upon which the author roared out "in the brutal tone that nature had given him, and which education had not corrected," "Voltaire has no other part to take than to go and hang himself." [1]

The pamphlet was published December 14, 1738, and it had the swift currency which savage assaults upon conspicuous individuals usually have. Its sale was rapid and large. An edition of two thousand copies, printed in Holland, was sold in fifteen days, and the affair was soon the talk of Europe. Life, meanwhile, at the château of Cirey was going its usual train: Voltaire hard at work upon his new tragedy of "Mérope," of which he had the highest hopes; madame absorbed by turns in her lawsuit and her studies; the marquis, anticipating a successful result of the suit, in treaty for a new hôtel in Paris, price two hundred thousand francs. From various causes, Thieriot had been much in their thoughts of late. He had spent two or three weeks at the château in October of this year, and while he was there, Desfontaines being a topic at the dinner table, one day, he had told the Bicêtre anecdote, — how the abbé, fresh from prison, had written a libel against his benefactor. Madame was a little jealous of this comrade of Voltaire's youth, but she gave him a cordial reception and hospitable entertainment. On his departure, Voltaire, under pretense of assisting him to pack his valise, had slipped into it a *rouleau* of fifty golden louis, which Thieriot did not discover until he had reached Paris.

Madame du Châtelet received a copy of "La Voltairomanie" on Christmas Day, and read it with such feelings as we can imagine. "I have just read that frightful libel," she wrote to their "guardian angel," D'Argental. "I am in despair. I am more afraid of the sensitiveness of your friend than of the public; for I am persuaded that the cries of that mad dog can do no harm. I have kept it from him; his fever having only left him to-day. He fainted yesterday twice; he is extremely debilitated, and I should fear the worst if, in his present condition, his feelings should experience a violent shock. Upon

[1] Letter quoted in Voltaire au Château de Cirey, par Desnoiresterres, page 175.

such matters his sensitiveness is extreme. His Holland booksellers, the return of Rousseau to Paris, and this libel are enough to kill him. There is no fraud which I do not invent to conceal from him news so afflicting." She continued to invent her amiable frauds during the whole holiday week, and, thinking that some reply to the pamphlet was necessary, she wrote one herself, which has been published among her works in recent times.

But Voltaire had had the pamphlet all the time, and had employed similar frauds to hide it from her. She appears to have made this discovery on New Year's Day; when, to her great relief, he took the affair with perfect coolness, seeming only to be concerned for its effect upon *her* mind. He told her there was no occasion to make any formal reply to an attack so absurdly violent. Their proper course, he thought, was to treat it merely as a criminal libel, prepare refuting testimony, and apply to the law for redress. He had already begun proceedings; had already sent to the Abbé Moussinot to buy a copy of the pamphlet in the presence of two witnesses, and to file the preliminary papers. Madame de Bernières promptly gave her testimony that he had paid rent for his rooms at her house; and, fortunately, he was a man who "never cast receipts away," and even his contract with the late president was on file at his brother's office in Paris. As to the evidence of Thieriot, that could not fail to be forthcoming with equal promptitude. All the knowledge he had ever possessed of the Bicêtre libel was obtained from Thieriot's spontaneous communications, and he could not doubt the loyalty of an old comrade, who owed all his importance in the world to his connection with himself.

But Thieriot was silent! The "Voltairomanie" had been circulating ten days, and still no word from Thieriot! All the inmates of the château were amazed and confounded. Voltaire was cut to the heart. He was aware that Desfontaines had felt his ground with Thieriot before publishing the pamphlet, for Thieriot himself had told him so, and Voltaire had advised him to make no terms with the abbé. "You are trying," he wrote, "to conciliate a monster whom you detest and fear. I have less prudence. I hate him; I despise him; I am not afraid of him; and I shall lose no opportunity to punish him. I

know how to hate, because I know how to love. His base ingratitude, the greatest of all the vices, has rendered me irreconcilable."

In this passage we have the simple explanation of Thieriot's silence. Like many better men than himself, and like many men worse than himself, he was afraid of the editorial pen; he dared not face the weekly abuse of a widely-circulated journal. It was this conduct of his old friend, and not Desfontaines's crude and lumbering abuse, that threw Voltaire into those convulsions of which Madame de Grafigny was a witness, in the early days of 1739. He wrote to Thieriot the most eloquent and affectionate letters, remonstrating, pleading, arguing. Madame du Châtelet wrote to him. The marquis, who was no letter writer, dispatched a long epistle to the cowardly parasite, urging him to do his duty. "The extreme friendship," he wrote, "which I have for M. de Voltaire, and the knowledge which I possess of his friendship for you, and the essential proofs of it which he has given you, induce me to write to persuade you to do what you owe to friendship and to truth." The Prince Royal of Prussia was enlisted in the cause, Thieriot being his literary correspondent and Paris express agent.

Thieriot struggled hard to escape this dilemma. He wrote thus to Madame du Châtelet with regard to the Bicêtre libel: "I have been much questioned concerning the truth of that statement, and this has been my answer: that I simply remembered the fact, but that, with regard to the circumstances, they had so little remained in my memory that I could render no account of them; and that is not extraordinary, after so many years. All the information, then, madame, which I can give you is that, in those times, at M. de Bernières's country-house, there was conversation concerning a piece against M. de Voltaire, which, to the best of my recollection, filled a copy-book of forty to fifty pages. The Abbé Desfontaines showed it to me, and I engaged him to suppress it. As to the date and title of that writing (circumstances very important in this case), I protest, on my honor, that I remember nothing of them."

This was terrible, and may well have thrown a too susceptible friend into something like convulsions. Voltaire searched among his letters of that time, and found three or four of Thieriot's in which he had written of the libel. August 16

1726, he had written thus: "Desfontaines in the time of his imprisonment [*dans le temps de Bicêtre*] wrote against you a satirical work, which I made him throw into the fire." In conversation he had mentioned the title of the piece, "Apologie du Sieur de Voltaire," which was not thrown into the fire, for it has since been printed, and is now accessible. Never was such pressure brought to bear upon a reluctant witness as upon Thieriot during the first weeks of the year 1739. The "stout lady," Madame de Champbonin, made a journey to Paris to add the weight of her personal influence. He made some concessions, at length, and joined the friends and family of Voltaire in demanding justice against the libeler.

It was customary then, it appears, for the friends and relations of a man bringing a libel suit to go in a body before the magistrate when the complaint was presented. The reader need scarcely be informed that Voltaire neglected no means to enforce his demand.

"Fly, my dear friend," he writes to Moussinot; "give the inclosed letter to my nephew. . . . . I entreat him to stir up some of my relations. Join yourself to them and to Madame de Champbonin. Do your part: move the Procopes, the Andris, and even the indolent Pitaval, the Abbé Seran de La Tours, the Du Perrons de Castera; make them sign a new requisition. Offer them carriages, and, with your ordinary address and tact, pay all the expenses. Add De Mouhi to the crowd; promise him some money, but do not give him any. You must, my dear friend, call yourself my relation, as Madame de Champbonin does. All of you go in a body to the audience with the chancellor. Nothing produces so great an effect upon the mind of a judge well disposed as the attendance of a numerous family. . . . . Spare neither money nor promises; it is necessary to rouse men, to excite them powerfully, in order to make them do right. I think it essential that my friend Thieriot should join my relations and defenders. . . . . Let us neglect nothing; let us push the scoundrel by all the means in our power. . . . . Justice is like the kingdom of heaven, and the violent take it by force."

Nor did he neglect to circulate in Paris satirical reflections upon his antagonist and the odious offense charged against him, which no Frenchman of that day, nor Frenchwoman either,

could resist. One anonymous letter, written at Cirey, descanted upon Desfontaines's memorial in a strain like this: "He calls himself a man of quality, because he has a brother who is auditor of accounts at Rouen. He entitles himself a man of good morals, because he has been only a few days at the Châtelet and Bicêtre. He says that he goes always with a lackey; but he does not specify whether this bold lackey goes before or behind; and this is not a case to pretend that it is no matter which. Finally, he pushes his effrontery so far as to say that he has some friends. This is to attack cruelly the human race." There were several pages of this letter, in mingled prose and verse, each sentence a distinct and cutting epigram.

The friends of Voltaire rallied in great force, and displayed extraordinary zeal. Besides Madame de Champbonin, the Marquis du Châtelet came to Paris on this business, and lent the weight of his ancient name to the support of the person who occupied his place at home. The Prince Royal of Prussia wrote to the French ambassador at his father's court, asking him to make known to the Cardinal de Fleury his warm interest in Voltaire's cæuse.[1] Desfontaines discovered, before the spring months were over, that his antagonist had struck down too many roots in his native soil to be overthrown by one rude, unskillful blow. Voltaire tired out friend and foe, magistrates and ministers. His letters of these three or four months are wonderful for their number, length, intensity, acuteness, and fertility of suggestion. It must have seemed to all the parties and to the public that never again could there be peace in Europe until that indefatigable and indomitable spirit at the château of Cirey was appeased. Desfontaines was finally notified that he had only the choice to retract or go to prison again. Voltaire had always disavowed "Le Préservatif;" he must disavow "La Voltairomanie." The Marquis d'Argenson, on the part of the administration of justice, prepared the draft of such a disavowal and retraction as was required, which the abbé copied and signed: —

"I declare that I am not the author of a printed libel entitled "La Voltairomanie," and that I disavow it in its entirety, regarding as calumnious all the charges brought against M. de Voltaire in that libel; and that I should have consid-

[1] Frederic to Voltaire, 1739.

ered myself dishonored if I had had the least share in that writing, having for him all the sentiments of esteem due to his talents, and which the public so justly accords him. Done at Paris, this 4th April, 1739."

Voltaire was not satisfied, but gradually yielded to the entreaties of his friends to molest the abbé no more. Three weeks after, he wrote to his faithful Moussinot: "Let us speak no more of Desfontaines; I am ill avenged, but I *am* avenged. Give two hundred francs to Madame de Champbonin, and that with the best grace in the world; another hundred to De Mouhi, telling him you have no more." With surprising facility, he half forgave Thieriot, repeating one of his favorite maxims: "When two old friends separate, it is discreditable to both." He knew his man, and, perhaps, also suspected that the *date* of the Bicêtre libel was such as Desfontaines claimed; that is, before Voltaire had rendered him the service. What is most surprising in this affair is the little regard for truth shown by every individual involved in it. They all lied, like ill-taught children, — not only the antagonists, but all their friends; and the final disavowal was known to be a falsehood by the honorable magistrate who drew it, as well as by the odious individual who signed it.

Desfontaines continued his editorial career, and occasionally had a safe opportunity to indulge his rancor against Voltaire. The Essays upon Fire, written at Cirey, were soon after published. He criticised Voltaire's with severity, and extolled Madame du Châtelet's to the skies. Her dissertation, he said, was "full of spirit and erudition, of things curious and pleasing." She was "a phenomenon of literature, knowledge, and grace;" and "if any one was capable of giving France a complete course of natural philosophy, it was the illustrious lady whose genius and learning the Academy of Sciences had esteemed."[1]

[1] 2 L'Esprit de l'Abbé Desfontaines, 201.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

FREDERIC BECOMES KING OF PRUSSIA.

VOLTAIRE came out of this contest a victor, but sorely wounded in body and mind; "his health," as Madame du Châtelet wrote in April, 1739, was "in a state so deplorable that I have no longer any hope of restoring it except through the bustle of a journey and a change of air. It is sad to be reduced to such a condition by a Desfontaines." An occasion for a long journey occurred that spring. Through the death of the aged Marquis de Trichâteau, cousin of M. du Châtelet, there was not only an increase of the family estate, but an additional hold upon that lawsuit of eighty years' standing, which was so frequent a topic at the château. The new acquisitions of land lay in Flanders, a few miles from Brussels, and the suit had to be tried in the courts of "the empire," to which Flanders then belonged. The Prince Royal of Prussia, too, while warning madame of the interminable delays of the Austrian judges, had promised to do what he could to accelerate her cause. "They say," he wrote in January, 1739, "that if the imperial court owes a box on the ear to some one it is necessary to solicit three years before getting payment." But Frederic knew intimately the Prince of Orange and the Prince d'Aremberg, all powerful in the Low Countries, and through them he hoped to quicken the pace of the cause through the courts.

On the 8th of May, 1739, the Marquis du Châtelet, Madame la Marquise, Koenig, her new tutor in mathematics, Voltaire, and a numerous retinue of servants left the château at Cirey for a very leisurely journey to Brussels, a hundred and fifty miles distant, which they accomplished in twenty days. Voltaire had lived three successive years at Cirey. A long period was to elapse before he again remained three years under one roof; for his connection with this family, so far from

affording him the peace and quiet he needed, only added their perplexities and excitements to his own, which were numerous enough without that large addition. He was an appendage who should have been chief. This lawsuit was his lawsuit, as his affair with Desfontaines had been theirs also. Upon reaching Brussels, they rode out together to see the new estate. Returning soon, madame, head of the family, hired a large furnished house in a secluded quarter of Brussels, and the whole party settled to their several occupations: she to law papers, German, and mathematics, rising at six to study, dreading to disgust Professor Koenig with her inaptitude; the marquis, who was soon to depart, to the calm digestion of his daily rations; Voltaire to his new tragedies and his "Louis XIV.," not declining his share of the law business. Madame was resolved to win her suit. She studied every document, law precedent, and usage bearing upon it, and had that entire confidence in the justice of her cause which is the aggravating privilege of clients.

But these were not people to give themselves wholly up to labor. Brussels had been for many years the abode of J. B. Rousseau; the Duke d'Aremberg having given the exiled poet honorable asylum, for which the duke is now chiefly remembered. Later, he withdrew his favor from Rousseau, and the poet lived in obscurity in a city where the arts were held in little esteem. Voltaire, still burning with wrath against him, desired to show the people of Brussels that he was still a personage, in spite of the devout libels of Rousseau and the lumbering assaults of Desfontaines. He was willing, also, to let them know that a French poet was not of necessity dependent on a prince's bounty. He gave a *fête*, in the style of a "garden party," to Madame du Châtelet, the Princess of Chimai, and the Duke d'Aremberg, to which he invited the society of Brussels. The invitations were given in the name of the "Envoy from Utopia," though he confesses he had never read Sir Thomas More's work upon that island, and discovered that not one person in all Brussels had ever heard of it, or knew what the word Utopia meant. The party was perfectly successful, and made the house a social centre to the world of Brussels. A deplorable incident, however, rendered the occasion one of misery to himself. In the morning, as he was su-

perintending the preparations for the fireworks, two of his carpenters fell from the height of the third story at his feet, and covered him with their blood. He almost lost consciousness, and was some days in recovering from the shock.

The Duke d'Aremberg invited the strangers, in return, to his castle at Enghien twenty miles away, where Rousseau had lived. There Madame du Châtelet and himself spent a week or two, joining in the noble game of killing time, the chief employment then of princes. "I play a good deal at *brelan*," he wrote to Helvetius, "but our dear studies lose nothing by it. It is necessary to ally labor and pleasure." He found Flanders very much what Charlotte Bronté found it a hundred years later: "It is not the land of *belles-lettres*. . . . . I am in a château wherein there were never any books except those brought by Madame du Châtelet and myself; but, by way of compensation, there are gardens more beautiful than those of Chantilly, and we lead here that luxurious and easy life which makes the country so agreeable. The possessor of this beautiful retreat is of more value than many books;" particularly, he might have added, to an author gathering historic material; for the Duke d'Aremberg had been wounded at Malplaquet, had served under Prince Eugene, had been part of all the military history of his time. These superb gardens exist at the present day, and the château itself has been demolished only a few years. Visitors are shown a Mount Parnassus there, upon which Voltaire and Rousseau may have stood, as well as some walks shaded by ancient, interlaced shrubbery, under which they must often have walked, though not together. After a round of splendid festivity at Enghien, to which the visitors added the intellectual element of comedy, they returned to Brussels.

But there was no resting-place there for a poet. The business of the suit obliged madame, six weeks later, to go and pass a month in Paris, where also Voltaire had business, two tragedies at once being ready for submission to the actors. In September they were in the metropolis. Paris was in festival, for the king's eldest daughter was just married to the Prince Royal of Spain, and the king was lavishing millions in tasteless magnificences, which, Voltaire thought, would have been better employed in permanent improvements.

"Paris [as he wrote to "the stout lady" of Cirey, Madame de Champbonin, — "big tom-cat," as he loved to call her] is an abyss, wherein we lose our repose and serenity of mind, without which life is a wearisome tumult. I do not live; I am carried, drawn far from myself in whirlwinds. I go, I come; I sup at the end of the city, to sup the next day at the other end. From a society of three or four intimate friends, I must fly to the opera, to the theatre, to see some curiosities as a stranger, to embrace a hundred persons in a day, to make and receive a hundred protestations; not a moment to myself; no time to write, think, or sleep. I am like that personage of old who died smothered under the flowers that were thrown to him. . . . . Such is our life, my dear *gros chat;* and you, tranquil on your roof, laugh at our escapades; and, for myself, I regret those moments so full of delight which we enjoyed at Cirey, with our friends and one another. What is, then, that bundle of books which has reached Cirey? Is it a packet of works against me? I will mention to you, in passing, that there is no more question here of the Desfontaines horrors than if he and his monsters of children had never existed. That wretch can no more thrust himself into good company at Paris than Rousseau can at Brussels. They are spiders, which are not found in well-kept houses. My dear *gros chat*, I kiss a thousand times your velvet paws."

This mode of existence, which did not prevent Madame du Châtelet from continuing her studies, was fatal to the production of dramatic poetry, which required, as Voltaire wrote to Mademoiselle Quinault, "the whole soul of the poet, a serenity the most profound, an enthusiasm the most intense, a patience the most docile." In November, without having seen either of his new plays in rehearsal, he set out with madame on his return, taking Cirey on their way, and before Christmas they were settled once more in Brussels, immersed in law, mathematics, and literature.

The new year, 1740, was one of the most interesting of Voltaire's life. The King of Prussia was fast failing, and the Prince Royal, his heir, was giving to Voltaire and to Europe the most engaging promise of a reign peaceful and noble beyond example. Never before had their correspondence been so frequent, so tender, so enthusiastic. The prince had set his heart upon editing and publishing the most superb edition of "La Henriade" that art and expense could produce. He meant to have the poem printed from engraved plates, as music was then printed, and he was in correspondence on the

subject with persons in England, where the work was to be done. Finding unexpected difficulties in the way, he imported from England a font of silver-faced type, and set all the artists and engravers of Berlin at work executing vignettes and other illustrations. "Whatever the cost," he wrote to the author, "we shall produce a masterpiece worthy of the poem which it will present to the public." Frederic composed an elaborate introduction, in which he extolled the poem in a manner so extravagant that the poet begged him to moderate his eulogium. The prince denied him this favor, and the introduction, as we now have it in the royal edition of Frederic's works, ranks "La Henriade" above the "Æneid," above the "Iliad," and, indeed, above all that man had produced of excellent and finished in epic poetry.[1]

Aside from this excess of praise, the preface was well calculated to strengthen Voltaire's position in France. Frederic, writing while the affair of Desfontaines was fresh in the public mind, hurls anathemas at those "half-learned men, those creatures amphibious of erudition and ignorance, those wretches, themselves without talent, who persistently persecute men whose brilliant genius throws them into eclipse;" and he endeavors to show France how unworthy it was of her to menace and maltreat a man who was the wonder and glory of his age and country. The prince quotes but three lines from the poem, — the apostrophe to Friendship in the eighth canto, in which kings are spoken of as "illustrious ingrates, who are so unhappy as not to know friendship." Frederic did not "stand by his order."

Voltaire, never weary of correcting his works, sent the prince a number of passages for insertion in the new edition, one or two of which had in them so much of the Bastille flavor that Frederic advised him not to print them in any French edition of the poem: "My dear Voltaire, avoid giving a pretext to the race of bigots, and fear your persecutors. There is nothing more cruel than to be suspected of irreligion. In vain one makes all imaginable efforts to escape the odium of it; the accusation lasts always. I speak from experience; and I perceive that extreme circumspection is necessary upon a matter of which dotards [*sots*] make a principal point."

[1] 8 Œuvres de Frédéric le Grand, 49, 51. Berlin, 1847.

Voltaire, in the course of his life, was favored with many reams of advice of this kind. Frederic often joined Madame du Châtelet in the well-meant endeavor to "save him from himself," — which would have been to annihilate himself. The passage which the prince had in his mind when he wrote thus remains in the poem (canto vii. line 56): "Soft Hypocrisy, with eyes full of sweetness, — heaven in her eyes, hell in her heart," — ending with the lines in which the church is represented as having inspired and hallowed assassination in the religious wars: "In Paris, cruel priests dared to soil the holy altars with the portrait of Valois's assassin. The League invoked him; Rome extolled him; here in torments hell disavows him." Such a passage, the prince added, was fit to be published only in a country like England, where "it is permitted to a man not to be stupid, and to utter all his thought."

The zeal of the prince in producing this sumptuous edition was indefatigable. He had a world of trouble with it, as men usually have who meddle with other trades than their own; but he was sustained by a heart-felt conviction that the delineation given in the poem of the religious wars — "the baleful work of wicked priests and false zeal" — was a lesson to kings and people of unspeakable value, which could not be too often repeated nor too strongly emphasized. "An idle prince, in my opinion," he wrote, "is an animal of little use to the world. At least it is my desire to serve my age in all that depends upon me. I wish to contribute to the immortality of a work useful to the universe; I wish to spread abroad a poem in which the author teaches the duty of nobles and the duty of peoples, a mode of reigning little known among princes, and a way of thinking that would have ennobled the gods of Homer."

Under the inspiration of Voltaire, he even determined to become himself an author. At this time, the last year of his liberty and leisure, he wrote his "Anti-Machiavelli," or critical examination of Machiavelli's "Prince," a work which he regarded as one of the most mischievous that had ever appeared. He told Voltaire that he meant his treatise as "a sequel to 'La Henriade.'" "Upon the grand sentiments of Henry IV. I forge the thunder-bolts that will crush Cæsar

Borgia," he wrote in his first enthusiasm; and the work continued for many months to be a leading topic in their correspondence. The "Anti-Machiavelli" is a dissertation in twenty-six chapters, wherein the maxims by which Machiavelli inculcates the art of despotism are demolished in the best manner of a young man whose virtue has not yet been brought to "the fatal touch-stone" of opportunity. Voltaire might well anticipate, as he read the chapters sent him by the prince, that Europe was about to see a powerful and rising state governed on Arcadian principles. How eloquently did the prince descant upon the barbarous kings who preferred "the fatal glory of conquerors to that won by kindness, justice, clemency, and all the virtues!" He wondered — he who was to invade and annex Silesia within the year — "what could induce a man to aggrandize himself through the misery and destruction of other men." "How monstrous, how *absurd*, the attempt to render one's self illustrious through making others miserable!" "The new conquests of a sovereign do not render the states more opulent which he already possesses; his subjects gain nothing; and he deludes himself if he imagines he will be more happy." Again: "It is not the magnitude of the country a prince governs which constitutes his glory."[1] Twenty-six chapters of such virtue-in-words, so easy, so delusive, make up the "Anti-Machiavelli" of Frederic of Prussia. Those words were evidently sincere. They were as sincere as the eloquent composition of a student upon temperance, which he delivers to admiration at eleven A. M., and who is led home at eleven P. M. of the same day, something the worse for his supper.

It is given to Frenchmen, as to ladies, to shed tears easily. These noble sentiments, uttered by a young man who was about to ascend a throne and command an army of a hundred thousand men, brought rapturous tears to Voltaire's eyes, and he delighted to call the prince the modern Marcus Aurelius and the Solomon of the North. He did more. He pointed out the faults and defects of the work with considerable frankness, wrote a preface for it, and undertook the charge of getting it printed and published.

There is nothing in the lives of these two kings so amiable

[1] 9 Œuvres Frédéric le Grand, 69, 70.

and pleasing as this early romantic phase of their long friendship, before either had seen anything of the other but his most real self — the man as he would have been if his strength had been equal to his disposition, or if he had been born in a much less difficult world than the one he actually inhabited. The prince's daily thought was to gratify and glorify a beloved Master, who gave his pupil an ample return of such wit and wisdom as he possessed. Frederic consulted his own physician upon Voltaire's case; sent him medicines and receipts; sent him casks of Hungarian wine, then much valued for weak stomachs; and gave him a ring that he was never, *never*, to take from his finger. He also supplied Madame du Châtelet with an abundance of amber articles, addressed to her a long poem, wrote her many letters, and claimed a place in the poet's heart *next* to hers.

He made known to Voltaire some of his royal dreams of good for Prussia: "Every chief of society," he wrote, a few months before his accession, "ought, it seems to me, to think seriously of rendering his people contented, if he cannot make them rich; for contentment can very well subsist without being sustained by wealth." To this end, he thought, kings should provide agreeable and cheering entertainments for their people; enjoying which, they could for a short time forget the unhappinesses of their lot. He told Voltaire that if the affairs of the world were really governed by an all-wise Providence, as people imagined, the kings of Europe would not be the extremely dull men many of them were. "The Newtons, the Wolfs, the Lockes, the Voltaires, would be the masters of this world." He described the tower he had built at his château, in imitation of Voltaire's hall at Cirey: the first story a grotto; the second a room for philosophical apparatus; the third a printing-office; the roof an observatory. A colonnade connected this structure with the wing of the castle in which his library was placed; and, thus bountifully provided, he passed his days in study, experiment, music, and composition; punctual at the daily parade of his regiment, not otherwise taking part in public business.

He was, as heirs-apparent generally were, the darling of his country; his portrait in every house, his name a household word. The few old heads who supposed they had Europe

in charge, at that period of personal government, regarded this young prince with some attention and little respect. His air-pumps, his tower, his verses, his flute, his raving enthusiasm for a French author, even his aversion to debauchery, all conspired to give them the impression that he and Prussia would be an easy prey. His regiment, however, was a model to the whole army; even his martinet of a father commended it.

In February, 1740, the king was supposed to be dying, and the Prince Royal was of necessity near his bedside. Frederic-William was only fifty-two years of age, and he had inherited a constitution that should have lasted eighty-five. Wine, tobacco, arbitrary power, and the infuriate temper resulting from their inordinate use had burned him out at this early period, and he was one mass of incurable disease. It is an evidence of the essential soundness of the prince's character, as well as of his discernment, that in all his correspondence and conversation he was loyal to this dull, defective parent, whom a physical cause maddened and destroyed. He gave Voltaire a glowing narrative of the great things his father had done in peopling a province devastated by the plague, and he never dropped an allusion to the terrible scenes in the palace and the prison which had embittered his own early years, and the whole life of his sister of Baireuth.

The king lingered nearly half a year, during which his son was severed from all that had made life interesting to him, and he was prevented by etiquette from engaging in new employments. He could merely wait, and stay at home, and look serious. In such circumstances, the only vent to his pent-up vivacity was in composing French verses; and this was his usual resource all his life, even in the crisis of a campaign, or while he was waiting for the development of a manœuvre. "As I cannot drink," he wrote once from the field to his sister Amelia, "nothing relieves me but writing verses, and while the distraction lasts I do not feel my griefs." So, now, at Berlin, waiting till his father's death should call him to new duties, he relieved his mind by writing long letters to Voltaire, in mingled verse and prose. Thus, February 26, 1740: —

"My dear Voltaire, I can reply only in two words to the

letter, the most *spirituelle* in the world, which you wrote to me. The situation in which I find myself holds the mind so strongly that I almost lose the faculty of thinking.

> "Oui, j'apprends, en devenant maître,
> Le fragilité de mon être ;
> Recevant les grandeurs, j'en vois la vanité." [1]

There were twenty-nine lines of this poem, in some of which he came as near poetry as he ever did in his life. He said, in plain prose, that, in whatever situation destiny might place him, Voltaire should see no other change in him than something more efficacious added to the esteem and friendship which he felt for him, and always should feel. "I think," he added, "a thousand times of the place in 'La Henriade' where the courtiers of Valois are spoken of. '*His courtiers in tears about him ranged.*'"

Many long letters in this manner followed, the prince often deploring his coming elevation, as well he might, and declaring that nothing consoled him but "the thought of serving his fellow-citizens [*concitoyens*], and being useful to his country." He hoped, too, to possess Voltaire. "Can I hope to see you, or do you wish cruelly to deprive me of that satisfaction? . . . . If I change my condition, you will be informed of it among the first. Pity me, for I assure you I am to be pitied."

Frederic-William died May 31, 1740. For a week the young king was immersed in business that could not be deferred. A monarch was to be buried; Prussia was to be delivered from the ridicule of his four thousand rickety giants; and tangled skeins of negotiation were to be unraveled. At the end of his first week of royalty he found time to write to Voltaire a short letter, which showed how little even an absolute monarch is master of his time and destiny. Frederic had thought to be king of Prussia, but was already discovering that Prussia was going to be king of Frederic.

"My dear friend [he wrote June 6, 1740], my destiny is changed, and I have witnessed the last moments of a king, his death-struggle, and his death. In coming to royalty, I certainly had no need of this lesson to be disgusted with the vanity of human grandeurs. I had projected a little work of a metaphysical nature; it is changed into

[1] Yes, I apprehend on becoming master the frailty of my being; receiving grandeurs, I see the vanity of them.

a work of politics. I thought to joust with the amiable Voltaire, and am obliged to fence with the old mitred Machiavelli.[1] In a word, my dear Voltaire, we are not masters of our destiny. The tornado of events draws us along, and we have to let ourselves be drawn. See in me, I pray you, only a zealous citizen, a somewhat skeptical philosopher, but a truly faithful friend. For God's sake, write to me only as man to man, and despise with me titles, names, and all external show. I have scarcely yet had time to recognize myself; my occupations are infinite, and still I give myself more of them; but, despite all this labor, there always remains to me time to admire your works, and draw from them instruction and recreation. Assure the marchioness of my esteem. I admire her as much as her vast information and rare capacity merit. Adieu, my dear Voltaire. If I live, I shall see you, and even this very year. Love me always, and be always sincere with your friend."

Three letters the young king wrote to Voltaire in the first month of his reign, in verse and prose, although, as he said, he had to work with both hands, — with one at army business, with the other at civil affairs and the fine arts; having twenty occupations at once, and finding every day twenty-four hours too short. Voltaire was not backward in responding.

"Sire," he wrote in his first letter to the king, "if your destiny has changed, your noble soul has not. I was a little inclined to misanthropy, and the injustice of men afflicted me too much. At present I abandon myself, with all the world, to joy." Then he told the king what delight his accession had given in France. "The French are all Prussians. . . . . The minister who governs the country where I am (Count de Daun, of Brussels) said to me, 'We shall see if he will disband all at once the useless giants who have caused so much outcry.' My reply was, 'He will do nothing precipitately; he will not betray any marked design to condemn the errors which his predecessor may have made; he will content himself with repairing them gradually. Deign, then, to avow, great king, that I have divined well. Your majesty orders me, when writing to you, to think less of the monarch than of the *man*. It is an order much in accord with my own heart. I do not know how to demean myself with a king;

[1] Cardinal de Fleury.

but I am quite at my ease with a true man, — one who has in his heart and his head the love of the human race. There is one thing which I should never dare ask the king, but which I should dare take the liberty of asking the man. It is, if the late king, before his death, came to know and love all the merit of my adorable prince."

He banters the king upon the question whether he would submit to the ceremony of coronation and anointing; asks him for the routine of his day; warns him to put a festive supper between the day's work and sleep; declares that he is enraptured at the thought of seeing him so soon; and protests that the sight of him will be a beatific vision. "I am not the only one who sighs for that happiness. The Queen of Sheba would like to take measures for seeing Solomon in his glory."

Solomon wrote a long reply, touching upon many points, but did not offer the least encouragement to the project of the Queen of Sheba. It was not his intention to invite a Queen of Sheba, from whom he hoped to lure an illustrious vassal. He informed Voltaire that his father had died in perfect friendship with him.

"Here, then, is the Berlin Gazette, such as you ask it of me: I reached Potsdam Friday evening, and found the king in so sad a condition that I augured at once that his end was near. He showed me a thousand marks of his regard; he talked to me more than a full hour upon public business, both home and foreign, with all the justness and good sense imaginable. Saturday, Sunday, and Monday he spoke in the same way, appearing very tranquil, very resigned, and bearing his pains with much firmness. He resigned the regency into my hands Tuesday morning at five o'clock; took leave tenderly of my brothers, of all the officers of mark, and of me."

Frederic continued at much length to answer Voltaire's questions. One piece of intelligence must have struck with surprise a man who was reading the proofs of Frederic's "Anti-Machiavelli:" "I *began* by augmenting the forces of the state by sixteen battalions, five companies of hussars, and one of body guards." But then he immediately added that he had founded a new Academy, had made the acquisition of Maupertuis, Wolf, and Algarotti, had invited to his service Euler, S'Gravesend, and Vaucanson, had established a new col-

lege for commerce and manufactures, had engaged painters and sculptors, and was *not* going to be either crowned or anointed. He spoke of those ceremonies as "frivolous and useless, which ignorance and superstition had established." He was working, too, with wonderful assiduity: up at four; medical treatment till eight; at his desk till ten; paradè till noon; at desk again till five; in the evening, music, supper, and society.

Voltaire was moved, amazed, and puzzled. "What do you think of it?" he asked his old friend Cideville. "Is not your heart moved? Are we not happy to be born in an age which has produced a man so singular? For all that, I remain in Brussels, and the best king in the world, with all his merits and favors, shall not take me away a moment from Emilie. Kings, even this one, must ever yield the precedence to friends."

Emilie, indeed, had a tight clutch upon him. Her obliging husband had now gone to the army, and never lived long under the same roof with her again. There was a period of five years, from 1740 to 1745, during which they scarcely met, though they were always on terms of friendship, and cordially coöperated for objects of common concern. Voltaire was husband, companion, lawyer, and illustrious friend to her, all in one; and she held him fast by making him believe that his presence was infinitely necessary to her. He had, moreover, vowed eternal fidelity, and he was a man to be faithful to such a vow. Planting herself upon this vow, as some women do upon their marriage certificate, she kept him in pitiful bondage through his sympathies, and of course dared not trust him out of her sight. The vigilant instinct with which women falsely allied to men are apt to be endowed causes them to scent danger from afar, and thus Madame du Châtelet, from the first, dreaded in the Prince Royal of Prussia a rival that could rob her of her poet. For the next ten years it was indeed always a question which should possess him; and between the two contestants Voltaire seemed sometimes in danger of being torn to pieces.

The struggle began in the first month of Frederic's reign, The refutation of Machiavelli was in the hands of a printer in Holland at the moment of Frederic's accession to the throne

and Voltaire, the editor of the work, so informed the king. But Prussia was now lord of Frederic. Surveying his amiable treatise from the height of a throne, he perceived several things in it that were proper enough for a prince to write, but not politic for a king to publish. "For God's sake," he wrote to Voltaire, "buy up the whole edition of the 'Anti-Machiavelli'!"[1] Here was a coil. The publisher lived at the Hague a hundred miles away, and he was a publisher who knew how much the commercial value of the work confided to him by Voltaire had increased by its author's accession to a throne. It was evidently necessary for the editor to go to the Hague. He went. Experienced men will know what he meant when he told the king that he "had had much trouble in getting leave of absence."

Rare scenes occurred at the Hague between editor and publisher, which could have been amplified into an amusing farce. Voltaire had sent a man in advance, post-haste, to try and get possession, on some plausible pretext, of a few pages of the manuscript not yet in type, so that he could enter upon the negotiation at an advantage. Not a page could be beguiled from the astute possessor of the prize. Upon hearing this report, Voltaire himself entered upon the scene.

"I sent for the rascal; I sounded him; I presented the thing in every light. He gave me to understand that, being in possession of the manuscript, he would not for any consideration whatever give it up; and that, having begun to print, he should finish. When I saw that I had dealings with a Dutchman who abused the liberty of his country, and with a publisher who pushed to excess his right of persecuting authors, not being able here to confide my secret to any one, nor to implore the aid of authority, I remembered that your majesty says, in one of the chapters of the 'Anti-Machiavelli,' that in negotiation it is allowable to use a little honest *finesse*. I said then to Jean Van Duren that I only came to correct some pages of the manuscript. 'Very willingly, sir,' said he. 'If you will come to my house, I will confide it to you generously, leaf by leaf; you shall correct whatever you please, shut up in my room, in the presence of my family and my workmen.' I accepted his cordial offer; I went to his house; and, in truth, I corrected some leaves, which he took from me as I did them, and read them over to see if I was not deceiving him. Having thus inspired in him a little less distrust, I returned

[1] 22 Œuvres de Frédéric le Grand, 14.

to-day to the same prison, where he shut me up as before ; and having obtained six chapters at once, in order to compare them together, I scratched them in such a way, and interlined such horrible cock-and-bull nonsense, that they no longer had the least resemblance to a work. That is what may be called blowing up your ship in order not to be taken by the enemy. I was in despair at sacrificing so fine a work ; but I was obeying a king whom I idolize, and I assure you I did it with hearty good-will. Who is now astonished and confounded? My scoundrel. To-morrow I hope to make with him a fair bargain, and to force him to give up all to me, both print and manuscript."

But Jean was obdurate. Voltaire sought legal advice, and found that, by Dutch law, a bargain was a bargain. He tried all arts and devices, and still Van Duren's press continued to strike off the printed sheets. Then he advised the king to kill Van Duren's edition by issuing an authorized version, which he, Voltaire, would superintend, and hurry into print. The king replied, " Erase, alter, correct, and replace all the passages you like. I submit the whole to your discernment." Voltaire recast the work in a few days, and, in a few weeks, had editions for London, Paris, and Holland ready for distribution ; and thus, although he did not prevent Van Duren from issuing his mutilated version, he prevented him from gaining much by it. In the late Berlin edition of Frederic's works, two versions of the " Anti-Machiavelli " are given, — the one edited by Voltaire, and the one as originally written in the king's own hand. Voltaire used his privilege of editor with great freedom, and made many gallant cuts in the manuscript, erasing in all thirty-two printed pages. When the king saw his diminished bantling, his paternal pride was so aggrieved that he resolved to disavow both editions and spend the leisure of the following winter in preparing a third, which should be printed at Berlin under his own eyes, and, perhaps, published with his name in the title-page. Before the next winter had reached its second month, the King of Prussia, as it seemed to his assiduous editor, was refuting, sword in hand, not Machiavelli's " Prince," but the prince's " Anti-Machiavelli." For the present, the king was sorry he had written the book, because " it had robbed the world of fifteen days of Voltaire's time." Late in August, 1740, Voltaire returned to Brussels and resumed his usual routine of labor and recreation.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

FIRST MEETING OF VOLTAIRE AND FREDERIC.

King and author, after four years of correspondence, were now to put their enthusiastic friendship to the test of personal converse. The king, in making the tour of his states to receive homage, was to approach, in September, 1740, the borders of Flanders. He was on fire to meet Voltaire. Rather than not see him, he would receive Madame du Châtelet also, though with great reluctance; and he wrote to her, at Voltaire's request, to say that he hoped soon to meet them both. He evidently had for her the repugnance of a rival. "To speak frankly to you," he wrote to Voltaire, "it is you, it is my friend, whom I desire to see; and the divine Emilie, with all her divinity, is only the accessory of the Newtonized Apollo." Writing the next day, the king added, "If Emilie *must* accompany Apollo, I consent; but if I can see you alone, I should prefer it. I should be too much dazzled; I could not bear so much brilliancy at once. I should need the veil of Moses to temper the blended rays of your divinities."

But, king as he was, he was obliged promptly to change his note; and he announced his intention, a few days after, of visiting them, *incognito*, at Brussels. They were to meet him at Anvers, a day's ride from their abode, and they would all go to Brussels together, — Voltaire and madame, the king and his three companions, Kaiserling, Maupertuis, and Algarotti. Nothing could be more agreeable to Madame du Châtelet; for Algarotti and Maupertuis were among her most cherished friends. Kaiserling had been her guest, and she was not insensible to the social *éclat* of entertaining a king. She had had a brief estrangement from the difficult Maupertuis, but Voltaire had healed the breach, telling the irritable philosopher that "a man is always in the right when he makes the first advance to an offended woman." Maupertuis, as it

seems, acted upon this maxim, and all was well between them. A most congenial party would have surrounded the king at her house in Brussels, where madame had extemporized ample preparation.

But there was, after all, a doubt whether the king could come. He was afflicted with the four-days ague, for which he was under treatment; and the next day, as he wrote to Voltaire, would decide whether that treatment had been effectual. If the next day passed without a fit of the ague, then he would go on from Wessel to Anvers, and meet them, and enjoy the most exquisite experience of his life.

But the ague returned the next day, and the king could only write a letter, not undertake a long journey. Could Voltaire alone meet him at Cleves, eighty miles from Brussels? "Let us cheat the fever, my dear Voltaire, and let me at least have the pleasure of embracing you. Make my excuses to the marchioness for my not having the satisfaction of seeing her at Brussels. All who come near me know what my intention was, and that it was the fever only that could have made me change it. On Sunday I shall be at a little place near Cleves, where I shall be able to possess you truly at my ease. If the sight of you does not cure me, I shall confess myself at once."

No French lady of that period could believe that this was not contrived; and we may also be perfectly sure that Madame du Châtelet did not allow royal letters to come into her house which she did not take the precaution of reading. We ought not to be surprised, therefore, to read in one of her letters of December, 1740, "I defy the King of Prussia to hate me more than I have hated him these two months past!" Nevertheless, Voltaire managed to break away, and take the road to Cleves in time for the rendezvous, carrying with him a letter from madame to the king, in which she declared she did not know which afflicted her most, — to know that he was sick, or to miss the expected opportunity of paying him her court. She also hoped his majesty would not keep long the person with whom she expected to pass her life, and whom she had "only lent him for a very few days."

On a chilly Sunday evening, September 11, 1740, Voltaire reached the castle of Moyland, six miles from Cleves, where

the King of Prussia lodged. At the gate of the court he found one soldier on guard, and descried within the court Privy Councilor Rambouet walking up and down, blowing his fingers. The visitor was conducted to the rooms of the château occupied by the king, which were unfurnished; and he perceived by the light of one candle, in a small side-room, a cot two feet and a half wide, upon which there was a little man all muffled up in a dressing-gown of thick blue cloth, and shaking with a violent fit of the ague. Voltaire, after making his bow, went to the bedside of the shivering monarch, and, as he tells us, "began their acquaintance by feeling his pulse, as if he had been the king's first physician." The fit passed, and the king was well enough to dress and join his friends at supper. With Voltaire, Maupertuis, Algarotti, Kaiserling, and one or two official persons at the table, Frederic forgot his ague, and led the conversation to deep and high matters. "We discussed to the bottom," Voltaire recorded long after, "the immortality of the soul, free-will, and the men-women of Plato." Doubtless it was a supper to be remembered.

The three days' visit was all too short for the discussion of the king's fondly cherished projects for the elevation of his country and the entertainment of its capital. Frederic availed himself of the pen of his guest in drawing up a manifesto, besides advising with him in affairs dramatic, philosophical, artistic, and literary. The king anticipated some years of peace, and with good reason. His whole soul seemed set upon employing those years in making Berlin a German Paris, with academy, library, theatre, opera, galleries, society, all in the true Parisian manner. What man so competent to aid him as Voltaire, who had lived but to promote and strengthen that which made Paris illustrious in Frederic's eyes? Three days of familiar, earnest, delicious conversation, three suppers of the gods, and the friends separated; but soon, as they hoped, to meet again, in circumstances more favorable, — perhaps at that château of Remusburg, where Frederic had lived as Prince Royal, and where he had built a tower and had gathered all the means of self-improvement. Voltaire, on leaving the château of Moyland, took the road to Holland, to complete the publication of the "Anti-Machievelli" and to superintend its

distribution. Thus, the King of Prussia did not send back in a few days the poet whom Madame du Châtelet had been so obliging as to lend him.

The visit did not, in the least, disenchant either the king or Voltaire. They were, if possible, more in love with each other than before.

"I have seen that Voltaire whom I was so curious to know," wrote the king, September 24th, to his familiar Jordan; "but I saw him with my ague upon me, and my mind as unstrung as my body was weak. . . . . He has the eloquence of Cicero, the sweetness of Pliny, and the wisdom of Agrippa; in a word, he unites in himself the virtues and talents of the three greatest men of antiquity. His mind works without ceasing; every drop of ink is a gleam of wit darted from his pen. He declaimed "Mahomet I." to us, an admirable tragedy of his own, and he transported us out of ourselves; I could only admire and be silent. The Du Châtelet is fortunate indeed to have him; for out of the good things he utters at random a person who had no gift but memory might make a brilliant book."

Voltaire was not less satisfied with the king. He described him soon after, in letters to Cideville, Maupertuis, Hénault, and D'Argens, in glowing terms.

[To Cideville.] "I saw one of the most amiable men in the world, — a man who would be the charm of society, sought everywhere, if he had not been a king; a philosopher without austerity, all goodness, compliance, and accomplishments; forgetting that he is a king the moment he is among his friends, and so completely forgetting it that he made me forget it also, so that I had to make an effort of memory to recollect that I saw seated upon the foot of my bed a sovereign who had an army of a hundred thousand men."

[To D'Argens.] "Why do you go to Switzerland? What! there is a King of Prussia in the world! What! the most amiable of men is upon a throne! The Algarottis, the Wolfs, the Maupertuis, all the arts, are running thither in a throng, and you would go to Switzerland! No, no; take my advice: establish yourself at Berlin. Reason, wit, virtue, are to be recreated there. It is the country for every man who thinks. . . . . To-day [at the Hague], I have seen a gentleman of fifty thousand francs a year, who said to me, 'I shall have no other country than Berlin. I renounce my own.' I know, too, a very great lord of the empire who desires to leave his sacred majesty for the *Humanity* of the King of Prussia. Go, my dear friend, into

that temple which he is elevating to the arts. Alas, that I cannot follow you thither! A sacred duty draws me elsewhere."

[To President Hénault.] "It is a miracle of nature that the son of a crowned ogre, reared with beasts, should have divined in his deserts that refinement and all those natural graces which, even at Paris, are the possession of a very small number of persons, who nevertheless make the reputation of Paris. His ruling passions are to be just and to please. He is formed for society as for the throne. . . . . As much as I detest the low and infamous superstition which disgraces so many states, so much do I adore true virtue; and I believe I have found it in this prince and in his book. If he should ever betray such grand professions, if he is not worthy of himself, if he is not always a Marcus Aurelius, a Trojan, and a Titus, I shall lament it, and love him no more."

[To Maupertuis.] "When we set out from Cleves, and you took to the right and I to the left, I believed we had come to the last judgment, and the good Lord was separating his elect from the damned. The divine Frederic said to you, 'Sit at my right hand in the paradise of Berlin; and to me, 'Go, accursed one, into Holland.' I am, then, in that phlegmatic hell, far from the divine fire that animates the Frederics, the Maupertuis, the Algarottis."

He was detained several weeks at the Hague, during which he lived, by the king's invitation, at an old palace belonging to the crown of Prussia, and inhabited by the Prussian envoy. He gave the king a poetical description of the dilapidated condition of this palace: its magnificent rooms with rotten floors and leaky roofs; its garret full of the shields, armor, and weapons of the king's heroic ancestors; their rusty sabres ranged along the walls, and the worm-eaten wood of their lances couched upon the ground, — dust like the heroes who had borne them. "There are also some books, which the rats alone have read during the last fifty years, and which are covered with the largest cobwebs in Europe, for fear the profane should approach them." In this musty old palace he lived two months. Madame du Châtelet embraced the opportunity of his absence to visit Fontainebleau, where she busied herself in preparing the way for his safe return to Paris. She had bought a very large and handsome house at the capital, which she hoped long to inhabit with her friend, when she had gained her suit in Brussels. Finding the Cardinal de Fleury not too well disposed toward him, she asked the

King of Prussia to use his influence with the cardinal on Voltaire's behalf.

"There is nothing positive against him," she wrote to Frederic, October 16, 1740; "but an infinitude of trifling grievances can all together do as much harm as real wrongs. It will depend upon your majesty alone to dissipate all those clouds, and it would suffice if only M. Camas [Prussian ambassador] would not conceal the favor with which your majesty honors him and the interest which you deign to take in him. I am very certain that would be enough to secure M. de Voltaire a repose which he has a right to enjoy, and of which his health has need." [1]

The king did not neglect to comply with this request. He had already more than once conveyed to the cardinal intimations of his warm regard for Voltaire, and Voltaire himself had taken pains to keep the French court advised of the same. Usually, he was careless about the address and date of his letters; but now, at the head of all his letters for Paris, he was careful to write, "At the Hague, at the Palace of the King of Prussia." Nor did he fail to communicate to his correspondents at court the more striking proofs of the king's favor towards him. Thus, on the very day, June 18th, upon which he answered the first letter written to him by King Frederic, he wrote to the Marquis d'Argenson, telling him what a tender and affectionate letter the young king had written him, and how the king had enjoined it upon him to write to him only as man to man. As soon as he had copies of the "Anti-Machiavelli" ready, he sent one to Madame du Châtelet for presentation to the Cardinal de Fleury, leaving the cardinal to guess the secret of its authorship, which was known to Europe. Thus the way was prepared for a closer connection with "the mitred Machiavelli" than either of them could have anticipated.

[1] Lettres de la Marquise du Châtelet, page 396. Paris, 1878.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

VOLTAIRE AS AMATEUR DIPLOMATIST.

In the early autumn of 1740, the system of personal government, as then established in Europe, presented itself in its fairest aspect. There was peace among the nations, and each of the individuals upon whom its continuance most depended had a personal reason of the most powerful nature to preserve it. Frederic, as we know, was ardent to carry out his project of engrafting French civilization. George II., of England, was never so sure of his native, hereditary Hanover as when Europe was at peace. The Emperor Charles VI. was a bankrupt, struggling to restore his finances. The Cardinal de Fleury, always devoted to a pacific policy, always more a priest than a minister, was then eighty-seven years of age.

Science, art, literature, the amelioration of the common lot, — all the dearest interests of man, that languish in war and revive in peace, — seemed more than ever the objects sought by governments, societies, and individuals. Three kings at once invited Maupertuis in 1740. An advocate of the system by which the interests and rights of two hundred millions of human beings were annexed, by the accident of birth, to the caprice of the dozen worst educated of them all might have been pardoned if, on the 15th of October, 1740, he had pointed to the condition of public affairs as an evidence that personal government, however absurd in theory, was still well suited to the imperfect development of man.

A trifling incident changed all. One day an elderly gentleman in Vienna, called Charles VI., Emperor of Germany, ate too many mushrooms! He died, and Maria Theresa, his daughter, reigned in his stead. A young lady of twenty-three, married to an ordinary man, was to hold together an extensive, incoherent empire, parts of which were hers by titles that could be called in question. All the powers were bound

by treaty to recognize her as the heir to the whole of her father's dominions. But that father was gone from the scene, — dead before his time, — a victim to his love of an expensive vegetable. A spell was broken! The political system of Europe was at an end. Each power sat wondering what the others would do, watching for the outthrust of an arm toward the chestnuts left suddenly without protection. Thirteen years of war and tribulation followed, involving Europe and America; causing more damage than arithmetic can compute, and more misery than language can utter; ending in salutary rectifications of the maps of both hemispheres, — ending in the United States of to-day and the Prussia of to-day.

Voltaire was still inhabiting the King of Prussia's palace at the Hague when those historic mushrooms did their fatal work. Besides his proof-reading and his copy-distributing, he was negotiating, on Frederic's behalf, with a troupe of Paris actors, whom the king desired to engage permanently for the royal theatre at Berlin, — a troupe complete in all the kinds: tragedy, comedy, opera, and ballet. He was writing, also, to his literary and philosophic friends in France, as we have seen, urging them to repair to Berlin, the new seat of the Muses, the new home of philosophy and toleration. He was soon himself to visit the king at his old abode at Remusburg, to discuss further all those fine schemes for making Berlin a more solid and tolerant Paris. In the midst of this joyous and hopeful activity occurred the disaster of the imperial indigestion.

"My dear Voltaire," wrote Frederic, October 26, 1740, "an event the least expected hinders me this time from opening my soul to yours as usual, and gossiping with you as I should like. The emperor is dead. This death disarranges all my pacific ideas; and my opinion is that, in the month of June next, we shall be occupied with gunpowder, soldiers, and earthworks, rather than with actresses, ballets, and theatres; so that I find myself obliged to suspend the contract we were making [with the comedians]. My affair at Liege is all finished; but those of the present moment are of the greatest consequence for Europe. This is the moment of the total change of the ancient system of policy; it is that detached rock which rolled upon the image of four metals which Nebu-

chadnezer saw, and which destroyed them all. I am a thousand times obliged to you for the printing of the Machiavelli. I could not work upon it at present; I am overwhelmed with business."

But Voltaire was to visit the king, all the same; and he understood the political situation sufficiently well to see that, at such a moment, he might be of use to an aged, apprehensive French minister. What did this young enthusiast of a king mean to do? That was a question upon which, perhaps, he could get some precious information during his stay at Remusburg. He wrote to the cardinal, acknowledging the favorable disposition towards himself which Madame du Châtelet had made known to him, and denying that he had anything but respect for true religion. "Formerly," he wrote, "the Cardinal de Fleury loved me, when I used to see him at the château of Madame de Villars." Two days after, he announced to the cardinal his intention to visit Remusburg and pay his court to "a monarch who took the Cardinal de Fleury's way of thinking as his model." He also reminded his Eminence that he had lately sent him a copy of a certain "Anti-Machiavelli," a work in which his Eminence's own sentiments were expressed, and which had been inspired by his Eminence's own motive, a desire to promote the happiness of mankind. "Whoever may be the author of this work, if your Eminence will deign to indicate to me that you approve it, I am sure that the author, who is already full of esteem for you personally, will add his friendship also, and cherish still more the nation of which you make the felicity."

The aged minister, disturbed already by unexplained movements of Prussian troops, poured forth two long, affectionate letters to Voltaire on the same day, November 14, 1740. His ancient love, such as it was, experienced a surprising revival. He became a father to Frederic's friend, a wise, indulgent sire, who knew how to allow for the vagaries of genius and the escapades of youth.

"You did me wrong [he wrote] if you thought that I have ever wished you the least ill; and I have been sorry for that only which you have done to yourself. I think I know you perfectly. You are a good and honest man. That first quality certainly will not harm you, and you are aware that Cicero gave it the first rank in the char-

acter of great orators. But you have been young; and perhaps you were young a little too long. You passed your youth in the company which the thoughtless world regards as the best, because it is composed of great lords. They applauded you, and with reason; but they yielded to you in everything, and they went too far. Very soon they spoiled you; and, at your age, that was natural. I trust that you feel it yourself; and that which gives me the most pleasure, in your letter of the 2d of this month, is the passage in which you speak of your respect for religion. It is a grand word, and let me, I pray you, give to what you say all the extent which my friendship for you makes me desire for it. Among the great number of duties which an honest man is bound to fulfill, can that one be excepted which regards our sovereign Master and our Creator? Even the pagans do not think so. Return, then, to your country with these sentiments, or, at least, with a willingness to yield yourself to them. You do your country honor by your talents; give it also the consolation to see those talents employed for the public good, the only end of genuine and solid glory. I have always esteemed you and loved you: I cannot give you a better proof of it than in speaking to you with the freedom that I now do."

Then, with regard to the King of Prussia, nothing, he thought, could be more becoming in Voltaire than to pay his homage to so glorious a prince.

"I was not aware [continued the cardinal] that the precious gift which Madame la Marquise du Châtelet made me of the 'Anti-Machiavelli' came from you. It is all the more dear to me as your gift, and I thank you for it with all my heart. As I have but few moments to bestow upon my pleasure, I have only been able to read about forty pages or so, and I shall try to finish it in what I call, very improperly, my retreat; for it is, unhappily, too much disturbed for repose. Whoever may be the author of this work, if he is not a prince, he deserves to be one; and the little which I have read of it is so wise, so reasonable, and expresses principles so admirable, that the author would be worthy to command other men, provided he has the courage to put them in practice. If he was born a prince, he contracts a very solemn engagement with the public; and the Emperor Antoninus would not have acquired the immortal glory which he retains, age after age, if he had not sustained by the justice of his government the exquisite morality of which he had given such instructive lessons to all sovereigns. . . . . I should be infinitely touched if his Prussian majesty could find in my conduct some conformity with his principles; but I can at least assure you that I regard his as the outline of the

most perfect and most glorious government. Corruption is so general and good faith so indecently banished from all hearts in this unhappy age that, if we do not hold very firmly to the superior motives which oblige us not to depart from right principles, we shall sometimes be tempted to lay them aside on certain occasions; but the king, my master, makes it plainly evident that he does not claim the right to use reprisals of this kind, and, at the first moment of the news of the emperor's death, he assured the Prince de Lichtenstein that he would faithfully keep all his engagements. I fall without thinking of it into political reflections, and I conclude by assuring you that I shall endeavor not to render myself unworthy of the good opinion which his Prussian majesty deigns to have of me."

The King of France, then, meant to keep the peace, — meant to respect the claims of Maria Theresa. Could the author of the "Anti-Machiavelli" do less?

Early in November, the season no longer favorable for traveling, Voltaire set out from the Hague on his journey to Remusburg, distant not less by the usual road than three hundred miles. At the moment of his departure, who should arrive but a young man, Dumolard by name, recommended by Thieriot for the service of the King of Prussia as librarian. That monarch had ceased to want librarians; but, nevertheless, he took him into his carriage, and thus had a traveling companion. The king, moreover, had been remiss in paying Thieriot's salary and expenditures as Paris agent and newswriter, and it occurred to Voltaire that the arrival of Dumolard would furnish an occasion for him to jog the memory of a king overwhelmed with business. "Send me at once," he wrote to Thieriot, "the amount of your disbursements; do not doubt that his majesty will act generously." Thieriot, in fact, was getting tired of writing letters and making purchases, even for a king, without receiving an occasional remittance.

The usual breakdown of their carriage occurred soon after they had entered the dominions of Frederic. One of their servants, as Voltaire told the king, asked help of some natives, who, not acquainted with the French language, supposed he wanted something to drink. Another servant ran off without knowing where. "Dumolard proved a man of resources, as if he had not been a scholar." Voltaire, accoutred as he was in velvet breeches, silk stockings, and low shoes, mounted one

of the carriage horses, restive and sharp-backed, and thus approached the walled town of Herford. "Who goes there?" cried the sentinel. "Don Quixote," answered Voltaire; and under that name he entered the city.

Two weeks of laborious travel brought him to the château of Remusburg, where he found a numerous and gay company of the king's friends, including his sister of Bayreuth. The quinine which Voltaire had recommended — a new remedy then — had broken the king's ague, and he was able to meet his guests in the evening. To all appearance nothing had changed, if not that the king was *more* bent on pleasure than usual; every evening a concert, at which he played two or three concertos on the flute; a merry supper afterward, with verses, play, dancing, and "eating to burst." Voltaire, who was always improved in health by a journey, was in his brightest mood, and pleased the king better than before. When opportunity served, the great topic of the day, the death of the emperor and its possible consequences, was spoken of between them. The flattering letter of the cardinal upon the "Anti-Machiavelli" was brought into play; or, as Voltaire wrote to the cardinal, "I have obeyed the orders which your Eminence did not give me, and have shown your letter to the King of Prussia." It was a bad move. He would not have recalled that embarrassing publication if he had known what was passing in the king's mind, and whither those regiments were tending which were on the march in various parts of the Prussian dominions.

But he did not know. Frederic II. had two kingly traits, — decision and secrecy, — without which no man is king. He knew precisely what he meant to do, and he confided his intention only to the three individuals who must of necessity know it. This excessive gayety, these rollicking verses, this musical assiduity, these feasts and balls, were merely his mode of concealing himself during the weeks that had to elapse before he was ready to begin his invasion of Silesia. Voltaire, therefore, after his six days' stay at Remusburg, went away without having discovered or guessed Frederic's purpose. He mentions in his "History of the Reign of Louis XV." that he was with the King of Prussia at this critical time, and could assert positively that Cardinal de Fleury had not the

least idea what kind of a prince he had to do with. He did not conceal his disappointment. Before leaving he gave the king this epigram : —

" No, despite your virtues, no, despite your charms, my soul is not satisfied ; no, you are only a coquette who subjugates hearts, but does not give one."

To this the king made a happy reply : " My soul feels the value of your divine charms, but does not presume to be satisfied. Traitor, you leave me to follow a coquette, — me, who would not leave you."

The amateur diplomatist went to Berlin to pay his respects to the queen and the queen dowager ; to Potsdam also ; then returned to Berlin, where again he saw the king, and joined the French ambassador in vain attempts to divine impending events. To both of them, on the subject of his intentions, the king was still evasive or dumb. Early in December the visitor set out on his return to the Hague, leaving Berlin excited and expectant, waiting anxiously for a development of the king's designs. The royal manifesto which briefly announced them was published about a week after Voltaire's departure, and while he was still struggling along on miry German roads.

We perceive from their familiar letters that, during this visit, each of these gushing lovers discovered that the other was human. The king asked for an account of Voltaire's expenditures in his service, — moneys spent in journeys between Brussels and Holland, printer's charges, copyist's wages, and other items. In reckoning with the king, Voltaire added the expenses of the present journey, which was undertaken at Frederic's urgent request, as well as for his pleasure and purposes, — its diplomatic character being an incident and an after-thought. The total was thirteen hundred crowns [*écus*]. And most of it was for the " Anti-Machiavelli," so absurdly embarrassing at that moment ! This king, moreover, had another royal trait, without which no man is long a king, namely, a fixed principle and habit of ruling his expenses with exactness. He was no lavish semblance of a monarch, like a Louis XIV., but the veritable ruler of his country, and in some degree aware of his responsibility to his " fellow-citizens," whose hard-earned money he administered, not owned.

But Voltaire also possessed this trait of the victor. He, too, knew the value of money, and hence presented his large sum total, only omitting from the account five months of his own time, so precious in Frederic's eyes. The king paid the bill with a wry face. He even exhibited the wry face to Jordan.

"Your miser," wrote the king, November 28th, to that most familiar of all his familiars, "will drink the dregs of his insatiable desire to enrich himself; he will have thirteen hundred crowns. His six days' visit will cost me five hundred and fifty crowns a day. This is paying a fool [*fou*] well. Never did the buffoon of a great lord have such wages."

This might have been deemed the irritation of a moment, if the king had not added, two days after, "The brain of the poet is as light as the style of his works, and I flatter myself that the attractiveness of Berlin will have power enough to make him return thither immediately, and the more since the purse of the marchioness is not always as well furnished as mine. You will deliver to this man, extraordinary in everything, the letter inclosed, with a little compliment in the style of a knowing procuress." Again, a day or two after, "I can assure you that Voltaire has made a subtle collection of the ridiculous people of Berlin for reproduction at the proper time and place, and that the Secretary of the Impromptus [Jordan] will have his place among them, as I mine. I have lost those verses which he wrote upon some tablets. Send them to me again."

It is a bad habit in a king to allow himself such license as this; for the time comes, at last, when the contrast between the language addressed *to* a favorite and the language employed in speaking *of* him comes to the favorite's knowledge. There were, in fact, two men in this Frederic II. of Prussia, as in an engrafted tree there are two trees. His stock was that of a strong, coarse, hard, ambitious, upright and downright Prussian soldier, — very much what his father would have been if he had had a good French tutor in his boyhood, and avoided excess in wine and tobacco. Inheriting something less of animal vigor than that of the paternal "ogre," Frederic had had an intelligent and gifted French teacher, who engrafted upon him that culture which made him, for half a century

turn to Voltaire with longing and admiration, even from the field of battle, — even from the midst of carnage, disaster, defeat, and despair. But he never was a Frenchman; with all his merits he was an imperfectly civilized being.

In France, in Rome, in England, in New England, in all advanced civilizations, women are at once the price and prize of the social system; its risk and its reward. They do not rule; they reign. They are not formed to rule, but to give lustre, charm, interest, and dignity to social life. Now, this Prussian Frederic, with such a termagant of a mother as he had, and a mild, submissive princess forced upon him as a wife, came to hold the whole sex in a certain aversion, and never admitted one of them to his familiar court. He tried to be happy without paying the price. He tried to enjoy the play without buying a ticket. His correspondence with his wife is one of the curiosities of epistolary literature, — brief, punctual, polite, and, as the poor queen herself remarked, icy, *glaciale*. The whole forty-seven years of it occupies no more space than his correspondence with Voltaire during single months. He would announce to her the gain or loss of a battle in three lines, in two lines, in one line, while writing to him four pages. In communicating to her the news of the battle of Soor, he extended himself to three lines, half a line of which read thus: "*They say* that Prince Louis is wounded." Prince Louis was the queen's brother. On another occasion he announced to her the death of a brother in battle, and added, "I pity you, madame, for the pain which it is natural you should feel at the death of your relations, but these are events for which there is no remedy."

The queen was not insensible to this treatment. "I am accustomed to his manners," she wrote on this occasion to one of her brothers, "but not on that account the less wounded by them, especially at such a time, when one of my brothers has lost his life in his service. It is too cruel for him to have such manners." [1]

It was not "manners;" the man was dead on that side. It was not possible for him to feel with a woman's heart, or see with a woman's eyes, or have the least intimation of the complex reasons, for example, why Voltaire could not break the

[1] 26 Œuvres de Frédéric le Grand, 23.

irksome bond that bound him to an exacting and exasperating marchioness. He endeavored to supply the void in his life, — which women alone can fill in men's lives and hearts — by surrounding himself with the most gifted spirits in Europe. It is consoling to know that this attempt was not successful.

Voltaire, meanwhile, was hastening homeward, dreading to meet his tyrant at Brussels. He had originally timed his flight into Prussia so as to get back before she had returned from Fontainebleau. The king had begged him for two more days; but away he sped to the Hague; whence, pursuing his journey by water, he was caught in the ice, and detained motionless twelve days. He employed the time, in the cabin of the vessel, in working upon his tragedy of "Mahomet" and writing long letters to his friends. He might well be afraid to meet Madame du Châtelet. She looked upon this diplomatic adventure with the indignation and alarm of a woman who had detected her lover going to a rendezvous. He was a whole month in getting from Berlin to Brussels, a journey now of ten hours, so that he was two months absent! She poured out her sorrows to the Count d'Argental:—

"I have been cruelly repaid for all that I did for him at Fontainebleau, where I put in good train for him an affair the most difficult that can be imagined. I procure for M. de Voltaire an honorable return to his country; I restore to him the good-will of the ministry; I open to him the road to the Academies; in a word, I give him back in three weeks all that he had taken pains to lose in six years. Do you know how he recompenses so much zeal and attachment? When he sets out for Berlin he dryly sends me the news of his departure, well knowing that it would pierce my heart; and he abandons me to a grief without example, of which others have not the idea, and which your heart alone can comprehend. I heated my blood so much by sitting up at night, and my chest was in so bad a condition, that a fever has seized me, and I hope soon to end my life. . . . . Would you believe that the idea which occupies me most in these fatal moments is the frightful grief which will be the lot of M. de Voltaire when the intoxication wherein he now is of the court of Prussia is diminished? I cannot sustain the thought that the recollection of me will one day be his torment. All those who have loved me must refrain from reproaching him."

These words were written at the time when Voltaire was using all his force to tear himself from that intoxicating court,

only that he might rejoin her. Nevertheless, the unhappy woman was not altogether mistaken. The tie which bound him to her was beginning to be extremely inconvenient, and he sometimes said as much to his intimate friends. From the cabin of his yacht he wrote to the King of Prussia some lines which Madame du Châtelet might have read with advantage to both: —

"I abandon a great monarch who cultivates and honors an art which I idolize, and I go to join a person who reads nothing but the metaphysics of Christianus Volfius. I tear myself from the most amiable court in Europe for a lawsuit. I did not leave your adorable court to sigh like an idiot at a woman's knees. But, sire, that woman abandoned for me everything for which other women abandon their friends. There is no sort of obligation which I am not under to her. The coiffure and the petticoat which she wears do not render the duties of gratitude less sacred. Love is often ridiculous; but pure friendship has rights more binding than a king's commands. My little fortune mingled with hers places no obstacle to the extreme desire which I have to pass my days near your majesty."

The news of the invasion of Silesia in December smoothed the way for the happy return of the baffled diplomatist; for he could assign to his departure a motive more dignified than lovers can usually offer for their late return. Peace was soon restored between them, and Voltaire could write to their guardian angel, D'Argental, that they were more lovers than ever, and that he would not go to Prussia if the king should make him a free gift of Silesia.

The invasion of that province astonished no man in Europe more than it did Voltaire; and he was obliged to agree with Madame du Châtelet that there could not be a more glaring contradiction between word and deed than the seizure of the province presented to various passages of the "Anti-Machiavelli," which the editor had modified, but not erased. Madame was not ill pleased to see the idol step down from his pedestal. "He may take as many provinces as he likes," said she, "if he does not take from me that which makes the happiness of my life." Voltaire was something more than astonished, so warmly had he certified to the young monarch's pacific and magnanimous character. He did not know what to think. He wrote to the Countess d'Argental, March 13, 1741:

"I do not yet know if the King of Prussia deserves the interest which we take in him. He is a king; that makes one tremble. Time will tell." On the same day to Cideville: "The cat of La Fontaine, metamorphosed into a woman, runs after the mice as soon as she catches sight of them, and the prince throws off his philosopher's mantle and takes the sword as soon as he sees a province at his mercy." Again to Cideville, a little later: "After all, he is only a king." The strangest thing of all was that Frederic, from the midst of his rapid campaign, found time to write his usual chatty, poetical epistles to Voltaire, and wrote with all his former careless gayety.

Nor did Voltaire neglect to call the king's attention, with his usual adroitness, to the apparent inconsistency of his proceedings in Silesia. On recovering from an indisposition in April, 1741, he wrote thus to the young conqueror: "I put only one foot upon the border of the Styx; but I was very sorry, sire, at the number of poor wretches that I saw passing over. Some arrived from Scharding, others from Prague or from Iglau. Will you not cease — you and the kings, your colleagues — to ravage this earth, which you have, you say, so much desire to render happy?" To which the king replied in a tone as far removed from that of the "Anti-Machiavelli" as even Madame du Châtelet could have desired, in her worst humor. "You ask me," said he, "how long messieurs my brother kings have given themselves the word to devastate the earth. My reply is that I know nothing about it; only it is the fashion at present to make war, and there is reason to believe that it will last a long time. The Abbé de Saint-Pierre, who sufficiently distinguishes me to honor me with his correspondence, has sent me a beautiful work upon a mode of restoring peace to Europe, and of preserving it forever. The thing is very practicable. Nothing is wanting to make it succeed except the consent of Europe, and some other bagatelles of that kind.'

Voltaire, however, returned to the charge both in prose and in verse. He told the king how much he wondered and lamented that the Solomon of the North should have become its Alexander, the affright of the world, after having been the object of its love. "I hate heroes; they make too much dis-

turbance. I hate those conquerors who find their supreme happiness in the horrors of the fight." Even the victories of the king wrung from him only a qualified congratulation. "I think of humanity, sire, before thinking of yourself; but after having, like the Abbé de Saint-Pierre, wept for the human race, of which you have become the terror, I deliver myself to all the joy which your glory gives me. That glory will be complete if your majesty forces the Queen of Hungary to accept peace and to make the Germans happy. . . . . Go on, sire; but make at least as many people happy in this world as you have taken out of it."

To this the king promptly replied: "Do not believe me cruel; but think rather that I am reasonable enough to choose an evil when it is necessary to avoid a worse. Every man who makes up his mind to have a tooth out when it is decayed would give battle when he wished to terminate a war. To shed blood in such a conjuncture is truly to spare it; it is a blood-letting which we give an enemy in delirium, and which restores him to his senses." Voltaire again pressing the king hard, and reminding him that it was he who *began* the war, Frederic rejoined, with what was intended to be a home thrust, "You declaim at your ease against those who sustain their rights and their claims by force of arms; but I remember a time when, if you had had an army, it would, no doubt, have marched against the Desfontaines, the Rousseaus, the Van Durens, and others. Until the platonic arbitration of the Abbé Saint-Pierre is established, there will remain no other resource to kings to terminate their differences."

In this strange correspondence they touched all their usual topics, even religion; the king again remonstrating with Voltaire for troubling himself with a subject at once so trivial and so perilous. "There are so many things," he wrote once from camp, "to be said against religion that I wonder they do not occur to everybody. But men are not made for the truth. I regard them as a herd of deer in the park of a great lord, which have no function but to people and occupy the inclosure."

Voltaire remonstrated: "I fear that you are coming to despise men too much. The millions of animals without feathers, with two feet, who people the earth, are at an immense

distance from your person, as well in their souls as in their condition. There is a beautiful verse of Milton : —

'Amongst unequals no society.'" [1]

Lib. viii., v. 387.

He hoped, however, that the king would not take too severe a view of human nature, nor think a king could not be loved for his own sake. And so each of these sovereigns of Europe pursued his career, and exchanged their thoughts; neither quite sincere with the other; and each having for the other a considerable, even a warm, but no longer an unqualified regard.

[1] "Amongst unequals what society
Can sort, what harmony or true delight?"
Paradise Lost, Book VIII.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

"MAHOMET" AND "MÉROPE."

THE first week of the new year, 1741, found him again settled at Brussels, much improved in health by his two months' contention with the elements. Madame du Châtelet and himself were at once absorbed in labors, literary and legal, scientific and metaphysical, dramatic and historical. An important point was gained, this spring, in the interminable lawsuit, after two years of exertion; and it was gained, as Voltaire observes, by the courage, the intelligence, and the fatigues of Madame du Châtelet. This advantage, he thought, would abridge the suit by two years, and made final success probable.

The reader may imagine that such a disturbed, tumultuous life, so far from books and conveniences, must have been detrimental to an author's proper work. It would have been to that of most men; but Voltaire was, as the King of Prussia remarked, extraordinary in everything. These interruptions may have saved him. He possessed, moreover, the power of snatching his work from the social tumult, the domestic broil, the mire, the waves, the ice. He could work in his carriage; he could elaborate a play in the cabin of an ice-bound vessel; he could dictate in bed; and when he was so sick that he could not do that, he could always, as Madame du Châtelet mentions, correct his poems, and even compose verses for a tragedy. He never worked more successfully than during this Brussels lawsuit period, from 1739 to 1745; and so he thought himself. "I have never," he wrote to Cideville in January, 1740, when he was in the full tide of his "Mahomet," "been so inspired by my gods, or so possessed by my demons. I know not if the last efforts I have made are those of a fire about to be extinguished."

That famous tragedy, one of the most vigorously tem-

pered of all his plays, was now ready for the stage. The moment chosen for the action of this drama is indicated by two of its celebrated lines: —

> "Aujourd'hui c'est un prince; il triomphe, il domine;
> Imposteur à la Mecque, et prophète à Medine."

Revered as a prophet, as *the* prophet, at Medina, his native Mecca is still restrained to the old ways by an aged, powerful sheik, the venerable and beloved Zopire. Mahomet and a few of his chiefs are allowed to enter Mecca, where, first, they seek to gain over Zopire and his party by argument and persuasion. This gives occasion to some scenes of commanding interest, in which Voltaire rises to a degree of dramatic force and fire which we can enjoy even without forgetting Shakespeare; and this the more as he did not himself forget Shakespeare. There are reminiscences of Brutus and Cassius in some of these fierce dialogues of "Mahomet;" the most important of which are between the aged Zopire and the chief of the new religion. But the spirit of those dialogues was the new wine which was to break the old bottles of the European system to pieces, and intoxicate the human soul. The old sheik taunts Omar, a trusted lieutenant of Mahomet, with the low birth of his prophet. "Mortals are equal," replies Omar; "not birth, but worth alone, makes the difference between them. Mahomet is one of those spirits, heaven-endowed, who are what they are of themselves, and owe to their ancestors nothing."

The great lesson of the play is that the founders of false religions at once despise and practice upon the docile credulity of men. When I remember that this powerful exhibition of executive force triumphing over credulity and weakness was vividly stamped upon the susceptible brain of Frederic by Voltaire's impassioned declamation, at the very time when he was revolving his Silesian project, I am inclined to the conjecture that it may have been the deciding influence upon the king's mind. All the utterances of Mahomet and Omar breathe the same impious contempt of human kind which the King of Prussia so often expressed at this period of his life. "The people, blind and feeble, are born for the great,— are born to admire, to believe, and obey us." ZOPIRE. — "Who made him king? Who crowned him? OMAR. — "Victory!'

ZOPIRE. — "What right have you received to teach, to foretell, to carry the censer, to affect the empire?" MAHOMET.— "*The right which a spirit, vast and firm in its designs, has over the dull souls of common men.*"

In the earlier scenes of the play the interest is chiefly intellectual; it is the conflict between the virtuous adherents of an ancient faith and the ruthless founder of a new one. Later, the interest arises from the struggle of opposing passions. It is necessary to Mahomet's purposes that the aged Zopire should be destroyed, and he selects as the assassin a young zealot, weak enough, as Omar intimates, to *believe* the new religion, without thought or question. But it requires the utmost exertion of Mahomet's fascinating and commanding personality to work the brave youth up to the point of slaying a defenseless old man. When he recoils, Mahomet addresses him thus: —

"Rash man, to deliberate is sacrilege. Far from me be mortals bold enough to judge for themselves, and see with their own eyes. Whoever dares to think is not born to be my disciple. Your sole glory is to obey in silence. Know you who I am? Know you the place wherein my voice charged you with the commands of heaven? If Mecca is a sacred spot, do you know the reason? Abraham was born here, and here his dust reposes,— Abraham, whose arm, submissive to the Eternal, drew his only son to the steps of the altar, stifling for his God the cries of nature. And when that God by you desires to avenge his wrong, you hesitate! Go, base idolater; fly, serve, crawl, under my proud enemies!"

The young fanatic yields; the murder is done; and Mahomet rules in Mecca. A complicated love story intensifies the later scenes, and renders the play effective upon the French stage. The obvious perils which such a subject offered to such a poet were avoided with much art, and the weight of the satire was carefully confined to *false* religion.

Among the English visitors to Brussels who frequented the house of Madame du Châtelet was Lord Chesterfield, and to him Voltaire read portions of the play. Chesterfield deemed it a covert attack upon the Christian religion. He thought that where the author wrote Mahomet he meant Jesus Christ. But, assuredly, in the play as we now have it, there is not a

phrase that gives the slightest countenance to such an idea. If there are in it any allusions to Christian history or French fanatic assassinations, they are completely veiled from foreign eyes.

And now, in the spring of 1741, the tragedy was ready for presentation. The retirement of two or three leading actors from the Théâtre-Français induced the author to defer its production there, when an opportunity occurred to exhibit it upon a provincial stage near at hand. It was those fatal mushrooms of the German emperor that gave him this unexpected chance. The company of French comedians with whom he had been negotiating on behalf of the King of Prussia were then established at the large industrial city of Lille, fifty miles west of Brussels, where also his niece, Madame Denis, lived with her husband. The manager was indignant upon learning that the treaty was to be broken off. He was of opinion that the king had gone too far to retreat without dishonor. He was even tempted to expose the proceeding to the public, and to select a moment for the purpose when the eyes of Europe were fixed upon the King of Prussia. Voltaire hastened to appease him, and as one means to that end consented to the first production of his "Mahomet" at Lille.

The play was given in May, 1741: the author present, accompanied by Madame du Châtelet and Madame Denis; the theatre filled with an expectant and excited auditory, flattered by a distinction accorded to a stage two hundred miles from Paris. The first acts passed off extremely well. While the poet was sitting in his box waiting for the third act to begin, a dispatch was handed to him from the King of Prussia, announcing the victory of Molwitz, the first of his long series of triumphs in the field. The dispatch of two lines, written two days after the battle, was penned by a flying victor, by a commanding general who ran away from his own victorious army: —

"*It is said the Austrians are in retreat, and I believe it is true.* FREDERIC."[1]

The people of Lille, who had been besieged by Austrian troops within living memory, could be nothing less than enthusiastic partisans of a young monarch warring against Aus-

[1] Voltaire to D'Argental, May 5, 1741.

tria at the head of his own battalions. The author of the play, prompt to seize an advantage, rose in his box and read the dispatch to the audience, who received it with the due thunders of applause. The play itself seemed to share the triumph of the king, and it was played to the end with a success the most unequivocal. It was repeated the next evening with equal applause, and was demanded for the third time. "*We* came near," writes Madame du Châtelet, "exciting a riot in the pit, because *we* hesitated to accord the third representation." There was even a fourth presentation of the play, at the house of one of the magistrates, for the convenience of the clergy, who, as the poet remarked, "wished absolutely to see a founder of religion." This, also, received the unanimous approval of the spectators, who were of opinion that the author had avoided the rocks and quicksands which the subject presented. The performance of the play also justified the author's high recommendation of the company to the king. "The manager," he wrote, "with the face of a monkey, played Mahomet better than Dufresne, and Baron made the whole audience cry, as when one bleeds from the nose."

These performances of the tragedy upon a provincial stage the author regarded only as dress rehearsals, and he subjected it to many a severe revision. One thing was reassuring: the clergy of Lille saw no offense in it. And, in very truth, even from a Jansenist point of view, there *was* no offense; not a line, not a phrase, to which the most sensitive Catholic could plausibly object. Various circumstances retarded its representation in Paris. A Turkish envoy, with a numerous suite, was a conspicuous figure in the great houses of Paris during the next winter, and the poet thought "it would not be decent to blacken the Prophet while entertaining his ambassador." The Turk departed at length, when a far more alarming obstacle arose. At a moment, in the summer of 1742, when Frederic of Prussia seemed about to enter upon that course of politics which was to make him an enemy of France, and when, in consequence, he was an unpopular person in Paris, one of Voltaire's comic versified letters to the king appeared in the gazettes. A post-office clerk at Brussels, following the example of his superiors, had broken the seal, copied the letter, and put it on its way to publicity.

"Here I am, sire," it began, "in Paris; *your* capital, I believe, for all the fools and all the wits, clergy, lawyers, dandies, pedants, speak of you without pause. As soon as I come in sight, crowds surround me and block my way, saying, *Have you seen him?*" Forty lines of these airy nothings, ending with a sentence or two in prose: "But, sire, will you be always taking cities, and shall I always be at the tail of a lawsuit? Will there not be this summer some happy hours, when I can pay my court to your majesty?"

This to a king whom the people and the ministry were beginning to regard as a public enemy! It cost him a world of trouble and multitudinous denials to parry the stroke. He protested that the letter had not been correctly copied; he wrote eloquently to the king's mistress, declaring that he was a Frenchman and a patriot; he set in motion all the means of influence within his command. Luckily, the Cardinal de Fleury, in his extreme anxiety during the crisis, again thought of Voltaire as a possible conciliator of the King of Prussia; and so the storm blew over, leaving the public in some ill-humor with the author of a play announced for speedy representation under the title of "Fanaticism, or, Mahomet the Prophet."

The garrulous advocate, Barbier, probably gave the current gossip of the cafés when he made his entry of August 8, 1742: "Voltaire is generally decried. People are convinced that the letter to the King of Prussia, which he has disavowed, is certainly his. . . . . Madame du Châtelet is severely reflected upon; it is thought singular that a woman of quality should lead by the hand a man who has rendered himself the object of general contempt. . . . . No quarter is now given her upon her gallantries. Her son's tutor, they say, was selected only because he valued himself upon having no religion. Nothing good is said of Voltaire's new piece, which, it is thought, will have a bad success [*mauvais succès*]."

Imagine plenty of such talk as this in the more sedate coffee-houses frequented by wig and gown. August 19, 1742, the tragedy was performed at the Théâtre-Français. Every precaution had been taken against every possible danger. The author had submitted the play, in form, to the censorship; he had given the manuscript to the Cardinal de Fleury

who approved it, and made some suggestions on points purely literary, which the author adopted. The theatre was crowded with an audience the most distinguished that Paris could furnish: many of the ministry were present; one great box was filled with magistrates; a number of the clergy were there; D'Alembert and the literary men were out in force; Voltaire himself conspicuous in the middle of the pit. Some murmurs of disapprobation were occasionally heard; but these were overwhelmed with the general applause, and the play gained, as it seemed, an unquestionable success. A second and third performance appeared only to confirm and establish the verdict of the opening night.

But those few murmurers had their way, notwithstanding. Thieriot used to recount that a professor of theology who was in the theatre the first night rushed out at the close of the play, and went home to the Sorbonne, declaring that the new tragedy was "a bloody satire against the Christian religion," and gave as one reason for the assertion, that the name of Mahomet had three syllables, "the same number as that of the adorable name of Jesus Christ"! The next day the solicitor-general, Joly de Fleuri, an important magistrate, heard of the play in a chamber of the parliament of Paris, and wrote of the same to the lieutenant of police: "I hear a comedy spoken of, which some of these gentlemen have witnessed, and which, they say, contains enormous things against religion." The lieutenant sent a copy of the drama to the solicitor-general, who, without reading it, wrote again to the lieutenant: —

"I need not tell you [said this enlightened personage], that I have not read a word of the play; but, judging from what I hear, I believe it is necessary to forbid its performance. Three persons of my knowledge saw it yesterday, and this is what they say of it: It is the acme of infamies, wickedness, irreligion, and impiety; and such is the judgment also of men who have no religion. One said, during the performance, 'I wonder the audience does not rise and stop the piece.' Another said, 'Here are fine instructions for a Ravaillac.' Another said, 'The author should be put in Bicêtre for the rest of his days.' One man, on leaving the theatre, met his friend, who was also going out, and asked him what he thought of the play. The reply was, 'I have seen it three times.' To this he responded, 'Never will I see you again. To have had the hardihood three times to see such horrors!' Everybody says that to have written such a piece a man must

be a reprobate fit to burn. This is all I have heard; it is a universal revolt."

The lieutenant of police, aware that the tragedy had received the privilege, despatched a courier extraordinary to Versailles, to convey this appalling letter to the minister, Maurepas, who, in turn, passed it on to the Cardinal de Fleury. The courier was not kept waiting many minutes for his return packet, which contained the following from M. de Maurepas to the lieutenant of police: —

"I took your letter, monsieur, to my lord the cardinal, and read it to him, as well as that of the solicitor-general which was joined thereto. Although his Eminence agrees substantially with you, he is nevertheless of opinion that you ought not to risk a scene for such a cause, and he approves that you suggest to the actors to assign the sickness of one of their number as a pretext for not playing the piece on Friday; also, that you advise Voltaire to withdraw the play from their hands, to avoid commotion. I even believe that you had better begin by the expedient last named, and that he will himself assist you to cover your proceedings. The communication to him of the epithets given his play by the solicitor-general, joined to a certain decree of the parliament, by virtue of which it is in the power of that officer to arraign the author of the Philosophic Letters [upon England], will render your argument persuasive; and by this means you will not be committed with any one. I hasten to send back your express, so that you may be able, before the end of the play, to speak to him, or to Madame du Châtelet."

The argument *was* persuasive, and the piece was withdrawn after the fourth representation. The reader remarks, doubtless, that the connection between the author of the tragedy and Madame du Châtelet was recognized and accepted by the ministry.

This abrupt, needless frustration of so many hopes and so much generous toil cannot be realized except by those who have borne something of the kind. There was, too, a witty Piron in the cafés to celebrate the mishap by couplets and epigrams; also, a malign Desfontaines to go about pretending it was *he* who had compelled the withdrawal.

The King of Prussia was not so absorbed in correcting the map of Europe as not to be attentive to what passed at the Théâtre-Français. He asked Voltaire to send him the tragedy

as it had been performed in Paris. The author had it copied, and sent it, with an apology for his countrymen. "It is the story of Tartuffe over again," he wrote, August 19, 1742. "Hypocrites persecuted Molière, and fanatics rose against me. I yielded to the torrent without a word. If Socrates had done as much, he would not have drunk the hemlock. I avow that I know nothing which more dishonors my country than this infamous superstition, made to degrade human nature. I ought to have the King of Prussia for a master, and the people of England for fellow citizens. Our Frenchmen, in general, are only great children; but, also, as I always insist, the small number of thinking beings among us are excellent, and claim pardon for the rest."

The king took him at his word, and urged him to pay him a visit at Aix-la-Chapelle. Voltaire spent a few days with him there in September, when Frederic, who had just signed a treaty of peace, renewed his endeavors to lure him away from his marchioness. He offered him a handsome house in Berlin, a pretty estate in the country, an income ample for both, and the free enjoyment of his time; in return, asking only the pleasure of his society, the honor of his presence, and his advice in matters relating to literature and art. No more persecution! No more Bastille! No more rude suppressions of immortal dramas! No more flights over the border for a few gay and harmless verses! No Desfontaines! No Jansenists! No convulsionists! Instead of these, life-long basking in the sunshine of royal favor, and the rank in Prussia of a man whom the king delighted to honor. But he remained true to his word. "I courageously resisted all his fine propositions," he wrote to Cideville. "I prefer a second story in the house of Madame du Châtelet; and I hasten to Paris, to my slavery and persecution, like a little Athenian who had refused the bounties of the King of Persia."

Meanwhile, the sudden withdrawal of a successful play by a celebrated author was having the natural effect of making it a European topic. Pamphlets were published upon it. An actor of Lille wrote one in the form of a letter. "The Sentiments of a Spectator" was the title of another. An unauthorized edition of the play was published in Paris at once, another at Brussels within a month; another at Amsterdam,

during the following winter, — all, as the author insisted, more or less incorrect. The poet's own edition was deferred for a while; but it appeared, at length, with unparalleled *éclat*, as we shall see in a moment.

A dramatic author, of all others, needs to have a spare shaft in his quiver; for the fate of a play is something which the astutest dramatist has never learned to foresee. For two years Voltaire had been elaborating a tragedy upon the ancient legend of Mérope, Queen of Messina, a story of the classic sort, like those treated by the elder dramatists. In "Mérope" he ventured to dispense with the passion of love, and to depend for the interest of the drama upon maternal affection. He felt all the difficulty of his scheme. It was his opinion that a reciprocated passion does not move the spectator of a play, and that therefore the love of mother and son cannot be as effective upon the stage as in the written story. "Every scene of a tragedy," he wrote once to Father Porée, "must be a *combat*, and the great rock of the arts is what is called commonplace." Nevertheless, he had ventured upon this theme, and he had now the play in his portfolio complete, and ready for the theatre. No sooner was "Mahomet" shelved than he drew forth this hidden treasure, and read it to the comedians. It was accepted and put in rehearsal, the author himself superintending.

The anecdote was current at the time that he had much difficulty in getting Mademoiselle Dumesnil, who played Mérope, to rise to the height of the terrific scene in the fourth act, where the distracted mother reveals her son to the usurper of his throne, — a scene associated since with the glory of the successive queens of the tragic stage of Paris, from Dumesnil to Rachel. Throwing herself between Egisthe and the guards about to lead him to execution, she cries, "*Barbare! il est mon fils!*"

The young tragedienne could not satisfy the author, and he gave the passage himself as he thought it ought to be delivered. "Why," said she, "I should have to have the devil in me to reach the tone you wish!" "Exactly so, mademoiselle!" cried the author. "It is the devil you must have in you, to excel in any of the arts."

The play was represented February 20, 1743. Various cir-

cumstances had inflamed public curiosity respecting it: among others, the new attempt of the author to get admission to the French Academy. The death of Cardinal de Fleury, January 29, 1743, had created a vacancy, and there was a ferment at the very idea of a Voltaire succeeding a cardinal. The harsh treatment of the author and the public in the affair of "Mahomet," six months before, must have conciliated many minds. The theatre, accordingly, was filled to repletion with spectators, most of whom seem to have been well disposed toward an author to whom they owed so vast a fund of innocent pleasure.

"Mérope," the most finished and evenly excellent of all Voltaire's tragedies, made also the most thrilling and triumphant first-night of his whole experience as a dramatic author. Its success with the audience was everything that the most sanguine and exacting writer could have anticipated, — a success without previous parallel.

Readers familiar with the old French drama are aware that the simple test formerly applied to tragedy and tragic acting was the quantity of tears they drew from the spectators. "Mérope" drowned the theatre in tears, filled as it was with the fashionable world of Paris, who might be thought hardened against theatrical suffusion. During all the last three acts, we are told, the audience was sobbing. Nor was the play quite wanting in those Voltairean strokes, so much in harmony with the "sentiment" of the period: "He who serves his country well has no need of ancestors!" This, also: "The right to command is no longer an advantage transmitted by nature, like an inheritance." Usually, however, the sentiments were those of the ancient time delineated, and the effects legitimate. Hence prejudice was dissolved, and the triumph was not marred by audible dissent. Advocate Barbier, a dull and narrow chronicler, who was so well pleased to record the forced withdrawal of "Mahomet," assures us that the success of "Mérope" was the most striking ever known in Paris. "The pit," he says, "not only applauded fit to break everything, but asked, a thousand times, that Voltaire should appear upon the stage, that the people might testify to him their joy and satisfaction. Mesdames de Boufflers and de Luxembourg did everything they could to induce the poet to com-

ply with the public desire; but he withdrew from their box with a submissive air, after having kissed the hand of the Duchess de Luxembourg." The same Barbier records that two of the poet's enemies, Roy and Cahuzac, came near fainting away, if one could judge from the mortal pallor which overspread their visages.

Voltaire himself adds an incident of his triumph. After escaping from the box of the two duchesses, who were his warm partisans, he hid himself somewhere in front of the house. Friends sought him out, and he drew back into the box of his old friend, the Duchess de Villars. "The pit was mad," wrote the poet to one of his friends. "They cried to the duchess to kiss me, and they made so much noise that she was obliged at last to do it, by the order of her mother-in-law. I have been kissed publicly, like Alain Chartier by the Princess Marguerite of Scotland; but he was asleep, and I was awake."

This was the first time, as French writers inform us, that an author was called for by an audience.

The actor Lekain adds an anecdote of the run of this tragedy. During the third or fourth representation, Voltaire was struck with a defect in one of the dialogues. That very evening, as soon as he had reached home, he made the alterations, and told his servant to carry the packet at once to the house of the actor who played the part of the usurper, Polyphonte, and who was to speak most of the new lines. The valet observed that it was past midnight, and that it was impossible to wake the actor at that hour. "Go, go," said the author; "tyrants never sleep!"

But this fine tragedy did not open to its author the doors of the French Academy. The death of Cardinal de Fleury, in January, 1743, made a chair vacant, and there was a strong movement to secure it for the man whose absence from the Academy was beginning to cast a certain ridicule upon it. He desired the chair as a protection against his enemies. "The tranquillity of my life," he wrote, "depends upon my getting it." He desired it not less, perhaps, because his election would be a victory over his enemies, whom he believed to be the enemies of man and truth. As the king had a veto upon the election, it was necessary to gain, besides the vote of the Academy itself, the concurrence of three individuals: the king's

mistress, the king's chief minister, and the king. It is Voltaire himself who informs us of his endeavor to secure this concurrence, and what came of it.

"Several Academicians [he says] wished that I should have the cardinal's place in the French Academy. At the king's supper table, the question was asked who was to pronounce the funeral oration of the cardinal at the Academy. The king replied that it was to be me. His mistress, the Duchess de Châteauroux, desired it; but the Count de Maurepas, secretary of state, did not. He had the mania to embroil himself with all the king's mistresses, and he did not find it advantageous.

"An old imbecile, tutor to the Dauphin, formerly a monk, and then Bishop of Mirepoix, Boyer by name, undertook, for reasons of conscience, to second the caprice of M. de Maurepas. This Boyer had the bestowal of the church benefices; to him the king abandoned all the affairs of the clergy; and he treated this matter as a point of ecclesiastical discipline. He argued that for a profane person like myself to succeed a cardinal would be to offend God. Knowing that M. de Maurepas was urging him to act in this way, I called upon the minister, and said to him, 'A place in the Academy is not a very important dignity; but, after one has been named for it, it is painful to be excluded. You are on ill terms with Madame de Châteauroux, whom the king loves, and with the Duke de Richelieu, who governs her; what, I pray you, has a poor place in the French Academy to do with your differences? I conjure you to answer me frankly. In case Madame de Châteauroux carries the day over the Bishop de Mirepoix, will you oppose her?' He reflected a moment, and said to me, '*Yes; and I will crush you!*'

"The priest, in fact, triumphed over the mistress; and I did not get the place, for which I cared little."

For which he cared too much! We have a long letter of his, written in the heat of the canvass, to the "old imbecile" Boyer, Bishop of Mirepoix, which takes unjustifiable liberties with the truth. He seems to have thought it right to fight fire with fire, solemn humbug with solemn humbug. He begins by saying that he had long been persecuted by calumny, which he had long been in the habit of pardoning; and, from Socrates to Descartes, it had been a habit with envious rivals, where they could not assail an author's works or morals, to attack his religion.

"Thanks to Heaven," he proceeds, "my religion teaches

me that it is necessary to know how to suffer. The God who founded it, as soon as he deigned to become man, was of all men the most persecuted. After such an example, it is almost a crime to complain; let us correct our faults, and submit to tribulation as to death! An honest man can, in truth, defend himself; he even ought to do so, not for the vain satisfaction of imposing silence, but in order to render glory to the truth. I can say, then, before God who hears me, that I am a good citizen and a true Catholic; and this I say because I have always been such at heart. I have not written one page that does not breathe humanity, and I have written many pages sanctified by religion."

A true Catholic he might claim to be; it was a harmless play upon words; but when he descended to use such an expression as "the God who founded it deigning to become man," he stepped over the line that divides what may from what may not be said by such as he. True, he deceived no one. He neither expected nor designed to deceive. He meant merely to deprive the hierarchy of a weapon against himself and his order. But he went too far.

He did not get the chair, however. The Bishop of Mirepoix, as if he really did regard the forty chairs of the Academy as forty benefices, caused the vacant one to be given to a bishop of very slight claim to literary rank. "For a prelate to succeed a prelate," said Voltaire, "is according to the canons of the church." He added that, as he had not the honor to be a priest, he believed it became him to renounce the Academy.

Four chairs, as it chanced, became vacant during this year, 1743, all of which except one were given to persons of little account in the world of intellect. Maupertuis was the exception, and his distinction was not literary. One of the seats was given to Bignon, aged thirty-one years, whose sole connection with literature was this: he had inherited from his uncle the place of king's librarian. "I believe," wrote the King of Prussia, touching one of these exploits of Mirepoix, "that France is now the only country in Europe where asses and idiots can make their fortune." The king sent comic verses also upon the "forty learned paroquets, who sat upon the French Parnassus, and dreaded to let in Voltaire, lest his

flashing brilliancy should dim the trivial beauty of their twilight."

It remained, however, that Voltaire was not of the Academy; while the old imbecile Boyer, about the time of the election, added to his other fat things a benefice of eighty thousand francs a year, to which the queen appended a suite of apartments in her palace, all the world expecting his good luck to be crowned soon by a cardinal's hat.

CHAPTER XL.

VOLTAIRE AND MADAME STUDY HISTORY TOGETHER.

When they first went to live at Cirey, madame was devoted to mathematics and he was collecting material for a history of the reign of Louis XIV. This was his serious work, poems and dramas being his delight, his glory, his defense. She objected to his employing time upon history. "This vixen [*béguеule*]," wrote Madame de Grafigny in 1738, "does not wish him to finish his 'History of Louis XIV.' She keeps it under lock and key. He was obliged to beg hard before she would promise to let me have it. I will baffle her little game." [1] She did baffle it so far as to get a reading of the manuscript, from which she used to copy long passages for the entertainment of her correspondent.

Voltaire confirms this anecdote, but he tells it as a lover tells the fault of a mistress. Far from styling her a *béguеule*, he speaks of her as "a person rare in her time and in all times," who had conceived a disgust for history from the manner in which it was usually written. "What matters it," she would say, "to me, a Frenchwoman, living here upon my estate, that in Sweden Egil succeeded King Haquin, and that Ottoman was the son of Ortogul? I have read with pleasure the history of the Greeks and Romans. They present to my mind grand pictures which hold my attention. But I have not been able to finish any extended history of our modern nations, in which I see little but confusion; a crowd of trifling events, without connection and without result; a thousand battles which decided nothing, and from which I only learn what weapons men used to destroy one another with. I have renounced a study equally tedious and immense, which overwhelms the mind without enlightening it." [2]

[1] Voltaire and Madame du Châtelet, par Madame de Grafigny, page 27.
[2] Essai sur les Mœurs. Préface. 19 Œuvres de Voltaire, 3.

She often spoke in this strain when something in their studies brought the subject into conversation. Sharing the general ignorance respecting the history of France, she laid the blame upon such chroniclers as the Jesuit Father Daniel, whose three ponderous folios of 1713 seemed to both of them to have been written on the principle of excluding everything of interest to thoughtful readers, and everything that could warn or enlighten patriotic statesmen. "I desired," she would say, "to read the history of France, Germany, Spain, Italy, and found a mere chaos; a heap of useless facts, for the most part false and ill digested; barbarous actions under barbarous names; insipid romances; no knowledge of manners, governments, laws, opinions, — not very extraordinary in a time when there were no opinions except monks' legends, and no laws but those of brigandage. The Middle Ages! Nothing remains of those miserable times but convents founded by the superstitious, who thought to ransom their crimes by endowing idleness. I cannot endure in Daniel those continual tales of battles, while I look for light upon the states-general, parliaments, municipal laws, chivalry, all our usages, and, above all, the progress of communities once savage and to-day civilized. I seek in Daniel the history of the great Henry the Fourth, and I find in it that of the Jesuit Cóton."

Much more to the same effect he attributes to her, which was probably only his generous and brilliant interpretation of her impatient disgust.

He tells us how he met her objections. "But," he would say to her, "if among so much material, rude and unformed, you should choose wherewith to construct an edifice for your own use; if, while leaving out all the details of warfare, as wearisome as they are untrue, all the petty negotiations which have been only useless knavery, all the particular adventures which conceal the great events; if, while preserving these details which paint manners, you should form out of that chaos a general and well-defined picture; if you should seek to discover in events THE HISTORY OF THE HUMAN MIND, would you believe you had lost your time?"

This idea, he says, determined her to enter with him upon a course of historical studies; and it was upon this general

scheme of tracing the progress of civilization and the development of human intelligence that they proceeded. At first, he was surprised at the little light thrown upon his subject by the multitude of books consulted. "I remember," he adds, "that when we began to read Puffendorf, who wrote in Stockholm, and to whom the archives of the state were open, we were confident of learning from him what was the strength of that country; how many inhabitants it nourished; how the people of the province of Gothland were related to those who ravaged the Roman Empire; how in the course of time the arts were introduced into Sweden; what were its principal laws, its wealth, or rather its poverty. Not one word of what we looked for did we find. When we wished to inform ourselves concerning the claims of the emperors upon Rome, and those of the Popes against the emperors, we found only confusion and obscurity; so that upon all that I wrote I put in the margin, 'SEE, INQUIRE, DOUBT.' These words, in large letters, are still to be seen in a hundred places of my old manuscript of the year 1740. The only thing which sustained me in researches so ungrateful was what we met now and then relating to the arts and sciences. This became our principal object. It was easy to perceive that, in our ages of barbarity and ignorance, which followed the decline and division of the Roman Empire, we received almost everything from the Arabs, — astronomy, chemistry, medicine, algebra, arithmetic, geography."

For a quarter of a century, — 1730 to 1755, — with intervals, history was his chief pursuit, and the result of his labors fills fifteen of the ninety-seven volumes of his works. The "History of Charles XII." was already European, though he still labored to correct and improve it. The "History of the Reign of Louis XIV." he intended should follow that, until these conversations with Madame du Châtelet widened his view and enlarged his scheme. For some years now he had been gathering knowledge for that general history of human progress which, beginning to appear in print in 1742, was finally given to the world many years later, under the title of "Essay upon the Manners and Spirit of Nations, and upon the principal Facts of History from Charlemagne to Louis XIII." The work as we now have it, in six volumes, is the

most voluminous of the productions of the author, and it is, perhaps, the one which has most influenced human thought in later times. One of its pregnant little sentences is, "*Quiconque pense fait penser*" (whoever thinks makes think). I know not if there is any other work published in the last two centuries that has suggested so much to the men who suggest. If it is now obsolete, it is so for the same reason that Adam Smith's "Wealth of Nations" is obsolete, — because it has accomplished its purposes. But it remains an enduring record of the development the human mind had reached when the author wrote *finis* on the last page of his last edition in 1775. It belongs now to the same class of productions as Pliny's "Natural History," — that wondrous and fascinating cyclopædia of ancient ignorance. On both works could be inscribed: *This is what men then knew and thought of themselves and their world.*

But there is one vital difference between the ancient and the modern investigator. Aristotle told his readers that women had more teeth than men, but never thought of counting to see if the statement was correct, and never advised his disciples to do so. He wrote upon anatomy, but, as Mr. Lewes shows, could never have looked into a human body. Pliny recounts ten thousand prodigies without question, satisfied to preface them with "*They say.*" Voltaire doubts, inquires, denies, ridicules, burlesques. His Essay, besides pointing out mistakes, is a contribution toward the natural history of mistake. He pauses often, after burlesquing falsehood, to dwell upon the laws governing the generation, promulgation, duration, and extinction of falsehood; and therefore, while falling very frequently into gross error, he educated his period to surpass and supersede himself. Gibbon, Niebuhr, Bentham, Colenso, Renan, Franklin, Jefferson, Darwin, Buckle, Motley, Knight, Carlyle, and others follow out lines of investigation which he suggested, or carry on investigation in a spirit and method which he made easy. Even Carlyle's Dryasdust was pierced by Voltaire's airy shaft, before the author of "Sartor Resartus" finished him with his heavy mace, and rolled him in his own element of dust.

Take Niebuhr for another example. Voltaire found Christendom still believing the legends of Romulus and Remus, the

Horatii and Curatii, and all the other Roman marvels, just as thoughtlessly as they believed the biblical prodigies. Besides laughing at this credulity, he showed, by amusing examples, the folly of believing a story because an ancient monument attested it. "What! because young Bacchus issuing from Jupiter's thigh was celebrated in a temple at Rome, did Jupiter actually carry Bacchus in his thigh?" After several questions of this kind we have the remark, "An idiot princess built a chapel to the Eleven Thousand Virgins; the incumbent of that chapel does not doubt that the eleven thousand virgins existed, and causes the sage who does doubt it to be stoned."

In Grote, also, the Greek legends are subjected to the same process; and Mr. Grote, improving upon the Voltairean method, relates the beautiful legends *as* legends, and through them gropes his way to the point where it is possible to begin history. Dr. Arnold pursues the same method in his "History of Rome."

Gibbon is another instance. Both for the method and the spirit of the "Decline and Fall" Gibbon was much indebted to this Essay; but especially for the spirit. Solid Gibbon could not catch Voltaire's lightness and brilliancy, or he, too, would have described Julian as a man "who had the misfortune to abandon the Christian religion, but did much honor to the religion of nature, — Julian, the scandal of our church and the glory of the Roman Empire." Gibbon's fifteenth and sixteenth chapters are wholly in the spirit of this Essay, though weightier in manner, and the result of wider investigation.

Bishop Colenso's arithmetical test applied to the Hebrew narratives was very freely used by Voltaire in the Essay, as well as in other works, accompanying the same with a profusion of exquisite mockery. The line of investigation pursued by M. Renan is in harmony with the spirit of the work, and was made possible by it.

The author most indebted to Voltaire was Henry Thomas Buckle, who died in attempting, with all the modern accumulations of knowledge, to do what Voltaire essayed with the scanty materials accessible in his day. Buckle's "History of Civilization," if the gifted and devoted author had lived to complete it, could have been little more than an amplification

and rectification of Voltaire's Essay. Even in the form, Buckle followed his model; for Voltaire too has an "Introduction" of extraordinary length, — nearly a volume. We are reminded of the English author in a hundred places of Voltaire's "Introduction:" as when we read, for example, of the controlling influence of climate in developing civilization; that civilization began with leisure, and cannot thrive without it; that the immensities of nature limited the population of America; that religion retards and knowledge promotes development; that the "aspects of nature," when they are terrible, make men more superstitious, and when they are benign make them less so; that such works as the pyramids prove the builders to have been poor and servile; that ignorance and fear are the allied causes of all that is most deplorable in the history of man; and that the beginning of all progress is the increase of knowledge.

He anticipates, also, those investigators who trace the gradual development of such doctrines as the real presence and miraculous inspiration, as well as the gradual construction of such modes of worship as the Catholic mass. On this line, he displays all his knowledge, acuteness, humor, and audacity. The infinite absurdities of the early church history, such as tracing the papacy to St. Peter, who never saw Rome, give him matter for many entertaining and effective pages. The awful power wielded for so many ages by the Ring of small-brained, greedy Italians who governed the church from Rome, and debauched both the mind and morals of Europe, received due recognition at his hands. He sums it all up in one sentence of terrible truth: —

"You will observe," he says, as if addressing Madame du Châtelet, "that in all the disputes which have inflamed Christians against one another since the birth of the church, Rome has always decided for the opinion that most degraded the human mind and most completely annihilated human reason."

Having made this powerful statement, he appends a jest: "I speak here only of history; leaving out of view the inspiration of the church and its infallibility, with which history has nothing to do." It was this mingling of weighty truth with amusing mockery that rendered the Essay the only historical work in six volumes which readers for pleasure were likely to read through.

If the merits of this work are immense, so also are the deductions which modern readers are obliged to make from former estimates. Its defects are due in part to the impossibility of procuring at that time the requisite knowledge, and in part to the narrow limits of the human mind, and to the dominating antipathies of Voltaire. Instead of expanding upon these defects, I will quote one passage which exhibits them, — a passage which American readers can judge better than others. In his last volume, he comes to speak of the colonies in North America, and he selects Pennsylvania and New England, among others, for particular remark. The reader will observe the extreme, even ludicrous, incorrectness of his information, as well as the influence of his early liking for the Quakers and his life-long aversion to Calvinism: —

"Pennsylvania [he says] was long without soldiers, and it is only of late that England sent some troops to defend them, when they were at war with France. Take away that name of Quaker, cure them of their revolting and barbarous habit of trembling when they speak in their religious meetings, abolish some other ridiculous customs, and we must agree that those primitive people are of all men worthiest of respect. Their colony is as flourishing as their morals have been pure. Philadelphia, or the City of the Brothers, their capital, is one of the most beautiful cities in the universe; and they reckon that, in 1740, there were a hundred and eighty thousand men in Pennsylvania. These new citizens are not all primitives or Quakers; half of them are Germans, Swedes, and people of other countries, who form seventeen religions. The primitives, who govern, regard all those strangers as their brothers.

"Beyond that province, the only one upon earth to which peace has fled, banished as it is from every other region, you come to New England, of which Boston, the richest city of all that coast, is the capital.

"It was inhabited and first governed by Puritans, persecuted in England by Laud, Archbishop of Canterbury, who afterwards paid for his persecutions with his head, and whose scaffold served to raise that of the king, Charles I. Those Puritans, a species of Calvinists, fled, about the year 1620, into that country, since named New England. If the Episcopalians pursued them in the Old World, it was a war of tigers against bears. They carried to America their sombre and ferocious humor, and vexed in every way the peaceful Pennsylvanians, as soon as those new-comers had established themselves. But, in 1692, the Puritans were self-punished by the strangest epidemic that ever attacked the human mind.

"While Europe was beginning to escape from the abyss of horrible superstitions wherein ignorance had plunged it for so many ages, and while sorcery and possession were, in England and other polite nations, only regarded as ancient follies, at which they blushed, the Puritans gave them new life in America. A girl had convulsions in 1692; a preacher accused an old female servant; they forced the old woman to confess that she was a witch. Half the inhabitants believed they were possessed; the other half were accused of sorcery; and the people in fury threatened all the judges with hanging if they did not hang the accused. For two years nothing was seen but sorcerers, possessed, and gibbets; and it was the countrymen of Locke and Newton who abandoned themselves to that abominable delusion. At last the malady ceased; the citizens of New England recovered their reason, and were astonished at their own madness. They devoted themselves to commerce and agriculture. The colony very soon became the most flourishing of them all. They reckoned there, in 1750, about three hundred and fifty thousand inhabitants, which is ten times more than the estimated population of the French establishments.

"From New England you pass to New York; to Acadia, which has become so great a cause of discord; to New Land, where is carried on the great cod fishery."[1]

This is highly diverting, and shows how difficult it is for a human mind to get to the limpid water at the bottom of the well where Truth resides. Defective information and a biased mind, — these are the reasons why each generation has to re-write for itself the history of the world. He attributes the Reformation to a squabble of two rival orders of monks, as to which of them should have the German agency for the sale of indulgences. Calvin, of course, he cordially and justly detests. To Luther he is more lenient. He approves Luther's marriage, commends his good-humor, and signalizes the fact that, ecclesiastic and controversialist as he was, he never committed a cruel action, — not even burnt a Unitarian. "Despite the theologic fury that reigns in his works, he was a good man at home, frank in character and peaceful in social intercourse. His hatred of the sacramentarians limited itself to expelling them from the universities and the ministry; a very moderate thing for the age in which he lived." On the other hand, he did not perceive, living in a Catholic country, that the Reformation was a step *toward* the emancipation of

[1] 6 Essai sur les Mœurs, 124.

the mind from the bondage of the letter. He saw that the writings of the reformers were silly and savage; he knew that their demeanor was austere and forbidding; and he supposed that, in removing the heavy yoke of the old church, they had imposed one more crushing still.

"If," he remarks, "the reformers condemned celibacy, if they opened the doors of the convents, it was to change human society itself into convents. Sports and plays were forbidden among them. Geneva, for a hundred years, did not allow a musical instrument within its borders. They proscribed auricular confession, but they wished public penitence; and so it was established in Switzerland, Scotland, Geneva. We succeed little with men when we propose something easy and simple. The strictest school-master is the one most run after."

In relating the horrors of religion in every age, he still blends pathos and fun; lamenting the woes unutterable that zealots have inflicted for religion's sake, and yet never allowing his readers to forget the trivial and ridiculous nature of the usages and doctrines for which they slew and tortured. He sometimes makes the mistake that we are all apt to make in commenting upon those scenes of blood and devastation, in Spain, in Holland, in Florida, in France, attributing them too much to individuals, and too little to man. People were dismal in Geneva and cruel in Spain, not because Calvin was dyspeptic and Philip II. ambitious, but because man was still weak, ignorant, and timorous. He, too, felt this when, after relating the appalling massacres that followed the surrender of Haarlem, he adds only, "The pen drops from the hands when we see how men are wont to deal with men." He felt it, also, and gave it memorable expression, when he wrote, "It is characteristic of barbarians to believe the divinity malevolent. Men make God in their own image."

Such were the studies that occupied him during these years of wandering and disturbance; cheered occasionally by the warm commendations of the King of Prussia, to whom he sent the portions as they were completed. Frederic praised this work without reserve. He pronounced it the ornament of the age, sufficient of itself to show how much superior modern genius was to ancient. For a wonder, he did not object to its audacities. "Cicero," said the king, "could not conceive how

the augurs could look one another in the face without laughing; you do more: you expose the absurdities and furies of the clergy to the view of all the world." Again, on reading Voltaire's account of the crusades, the king broke into poetry, congratulating himself upon being Voltaire's contemporary, to be instructed by him, instead of being a crusader, to be pierced by his satire. "Go on with this excellent work," he added; "go on with it for the love of truth; go on for the happiness of men. It is a king who exhorts you to write the follies of kings." Frederic was, indeed, so roused by it that he resumed his own literary labors, wrote a poem and a comedy, and began to compose those Memoirs of his house and time which occupy six of the thirty volumes of his works.

The "History of the Age of Louis XIV." was not neglected, meanwhile. The author's familiar intercourse with the men and women whose parents and connections had lived at the old court supplied him with documents and memoirs. To the polite society of his time no other work of his could have been so fascinating as this *mélange* of anecdote, epigram, and history. He "stands by his order." Half his first volume consists of a catalogue, with brief explanations, of the principal writers of the time of the late king, among whom, with his usual tenacious loyalty, he includes "Châtelet (Gabrielle-Emilie Le Tonnelier de Breteuil, Marquise du)" who was nine years of age when Louis XIV. died. She was dead herself when he added that, "of all the women who had illustrated France, she was the one who had possessed most of genuine *esprit*, and had least affected the *bel-esprit*." The History is so much occupied with matters appertaining to the mind and the taste that it reminds us of the amiable Philadelphian who proposed the "History of the United States with the Wars omitted."

He could not, for many reasons, speak of the late king with perfect candor. He was himself somewhat under the influence of the general illusion with regard to Louis XIV.; and the more because the redeeming glory of his reign was the encouragement given to art and literature. Nor had the colossal egotism of the monarch been clearly revealed to the world, though it had brought France close to the verge of ruin, and left to his successor the chaos of 1715. The Memoirs of Saint Simon, of Madame de Maintenon, and many

others enable us to know that court better than any individual could have known it who spent a life in attendance. Voltaire knew more than he could tell, and he "manages" the dangerous points of his theme with all his own audacious prudence. The anecdotes are a valuable part of his work, and these will make it always a source of information. "Anecdotes," he says, "are an inclosed field in which one gleans after the vast harvest of history." Most of those which he has recorded have become part of the common stock of entertainment and illustration, used by each generation as it passes, and left intact for the next. The spirit of the work is Voltairean enough. In other words, it is a solicitation, in three agreeable volumes, to the world of readers, to think with their own minds, to believe only what is in harmony with the known nature of things, and, having done this themselves, to concede the same right to all men without reserve. The Revocation of the Edict of Nantes he adduced as a case in point. How often during his long life he returned to this theme! He reminded his countrymen, on every convenient opportunity, that the priests who ruled the ignorant mind of Louis XIV. drove from the kingdom eight hundred thousand people, moral, skillful, frugal, loyal, who carried away with them a thousand millions of francs, and planted in Holland, England, Germany, America, several branches of manufacture of which till then France had enjoyed a monopoly. He told his countrymen of the great colonies of Frenchmen that he had himself seen in Berlin, London, Switzerland, Holland, — the descendants of those good people who had followed their pastors into exile, rather than renounce their right to believe. On this point he was called in question, and met his opponent with accounts of these foreign settlements as visited and inspected by himself.

He concluded the History with a narrative of the persistent endeavor on the part of the Jesuits, under Louis XIV., to convert the Chinese. The missionaries sent home a pious lie to inflame the zeal and swell the offerings of the people of France. Four crosses had appeared, they said, on the clouds near the horizon, as if to sanction the sublime enterprise. Voltaire ended his History thus: "But if God had wished that China should become Christian, would he have contented himself with putting some crosses in the air? Would he not have put them in the heart of the Chinese?"

CHAPTER XLI.

AMATEUR DIPLOMATIST AGAIN.

THESE elevated studies were never so frequently or so long interrupted as during the next two or three years, — a period of his life to which he always looked back with regret. When he was an old man, the Abbé Duvernet asked him if it was true that he had once been a courtier. He replied that it was all too true. "In 1744 and 1745," he added, "I was one; I corrected myself in 1746; and I repented in 1747." He understated the misfortune. From 1743 to 1753 he passed a great part of his time at or near the courts of his three kings, Louis, Frederic, and Stanislas, snatching his own proper work from tumultuous distraction. "It was not the period of my glory," said he, "if I ever had any." [1]

There was a grand wedding at Paris, in the family of the Du Châtelets, in the spring of 1743. Madame du Châtelet gave her daughter to a Neapolitan, the Duke de Montenero-Caraff. It appears to have been a veritable marriage of the good old time: the bride a plump damsel of seventeen, fresh from the convent; the bridegroom much older, a foreigner, as Voltaire notes, "with a big nose, a meagre visage, and a hollow chest." But the King of France signed the contract; the King of Prussia was formally notified; and all was done in the rules. The mother had had other wishes for this daughter; at least, she said so in her letter announcing the marriage to the King of Prussia. "If *my* vows had been heard," she wrote, "it had been at your court that she had passed her life; and that would have been a happiness of which I should have been jealous." Could the young Baron de Kaiserling have aspired? The young lady had been brought home from her convent to take part in a comedy performed for his amusement at Cirey.

[1] Voltaire to Duvernet, February, 1776.

Weightier matters called Voltaire from his books in June, 1743, and detained him long. Europe was still embroiled. Frederic, who had broken the peace in 1740, had withdrawn from the strife, with Silesia his own. He was at peace; but France was waging disastrous, discreditable war against Austria and Hanover, a war without well-defined object, and wofully ill conducted. Again all eyes were fixed in hope or dread upon Prussia, whose alliance could turn the scale and give to either belligerent decisive preponderance. It was Frederic himself who seemed to invite Voltaire to try once more his skill in the diplomatic art. "I now ask you," wrote Frederic, "for a new explanation; for, behold, the cardinal is dead and affairs are going a different way. It were good to know what are the channels which it is necessary to employ."

The Duke de Richelieu was then "first gentleman of the king's bed-chamber," an office which he fulfilled by supplying that sumptuous apartment with occupants agreeable to the king, and useful to himself. The Duchess de Châteauroux was one of them. Petticoat II. she was styled by a King of Prussia, indifferent to women. Richelieu conceived the scheme of sending Voltaire to Berlin on a secret mission to sound the King of Prussia, to warn him of the danger to himself of allowing Maria Theresa to recover power and prestige through the aid of the King of Hanover, who was also King of England, and to win him over to an alliance with France; or, as Voltaire expressed it, "to ask him if he would be so good as to lend us a hundred thousand men, for the nonce, in order the better to assure his Silesia." The mistress seconded, the ministry adopted, the king sanctioned the project, and he prepared to depart.

A pretext being necessary to account for his presence at Berlin, he suggested his recent public quarrel with the ancient Bishop of Mirepoix, which also the king approved. The new envoy wrote to Frederic that he was about to seek refuge at his court from the persecutions of "that bigoted old monk." Boyer was accustomed to sign himself, officially, the "*anc.* Bishop of Mirepoix." The abbreviation *anc.* in the bad handwriting of the bishop bore a resemblance to the French word *ane*, which means ass. Voltaire and Frederic styled him habitually *l'ane de Mirepoix*, and made merry at his ex-

pense. Voltaire took care that the bishop should see some of the king's letters in which liberties of this kind were taken with his name and character. Boyer complained to the King of France that Voltaire was giving him out in foreign courts as a fool. Louis replied, as Voltaire reports, that "it was *a thing agreed upon*, and that he need not concern himself about it." Thus, he adds, he had the pleasure, at once, of avenging the indignity of his exclusion from the Academy, of taking an agreeable journey, and of having an opportunity to serve his king; all, too, at the king's expense, for he was authorized to spend as much money as he wished.

But how was he to get away from Madame du Châtelet, who would make "a horrible outcry" at this appearance of desertion? It was agreed that she should be let into the secret, and that the letters between Voltaire and the ministry should pass through her hands. She made the outcry, notwithstanding; but she made it with discretion and with histrionic effects. Voltaire took leave of her about June 15, 1743, to be gone six weeks; and she performed her part so well that the gossiping Barbier was deceived by it. July 1st, he made this entry in his diary: "Madame du Châtelet is going immediately to join Voltaire at Brussels. It is remarked that the government ought to conciliate this poet, or else assure itself of him. He is extremely dissatisfied, extremely angry, and in great favor with the King of Prussia. That woman passed a part of Saturday last in crying, because she had not received on Friday any letters from that Adonis."[1] From this we may infer that the purpose of the journey was not suspected.

Before leaving Paris he procured from his old school-fellow, the Marquis d'Argenson, minister of war, a contract for his relations, Marchand and son, for making ten thousand army coats. "All they ask," said he, "is to clothe and feed the defenders of France." Marchand lived to be a farmer-general. For another nephew, badly wounded in a recent action, he solicited "that cross of St. Louis, for which men have their arms and legs broken." For Madame du Châtelet, also, he obtained something, not stated, from the same minister. "Permit me, Monseigneur," he writes to D'Argenson from the Hague, "to thank you tenderly for the favor accorded to

[1] 8 Journal de Barbier, 309.

Madame du Châtelet, and for the manner of it." He was in great vogue; for the first news he had to remark upon in his letters to the minister was of the famous victory won over the French at Dettingen by George II.'s English and Hanoverian troops, — that army of Uncle Toby's which swore so terribly in Flanders. Nothing was too good for the envoy who might win for France at such a crisis so powerful an ally as Frederic II., King of Prussia. The envoy improved his hour of sunshine.

From the light tone in which he wrote of his mission, years after, we might suppose that it was all a jest at the expense of *l'ane de Mirepoix*. His letters of the time, however, show that he was a vigilant, laborious, and able amateur in the diplomatic art, with the usual fault of the amateur, excess of zeal. He sent home an abundance of documents, maps, plans, and information, supplied by and through Frederic's agents and ministers. He dispatched couriers; he sent unsigned letters; he wound himself up in impenetrable secrecy, and behaved, in all respects, in the approved diplomatic style. But he did more than this. Living for six weeks in Prussia, in the royal palaces, in daily and nightly intimacy with the king, he had with him long and serious conversations, in the course of which Frederic spoke with apparent candor and fullness of his intentions and desires. Voltaire reports one of these conversations to M. Amelot, French minister for foreign affairs. It occurred September 3, 1743, in Voltaire's own room, after a dinner given by the king to M. de Valori, the French ambassador at Berlin. The gayety and ease of a Paris table marked this repast, and, when it was over, the king came to Voltaire's apartment, and they talked alone together until the evening concert was announced.

The King. — "I was very glad yesterday to invite the envoy of France alone of all the ministers, not only to give him marks of consideration, but to disquiet those who would be displeased at the preference."

Voltaire. — "The envoy of France would be much more content if your majesty should send some troops to Wesel or to Magdeburg."

The King. — "But what do you wish me to do? Will the King of France ever forgive my having made a separate peace?"

Voltaire. — "Sire, great kings know not vengeance; all yields to

the interest of the state. You know if the interest of your majesty and that of France is not to be forever united."

THE KING. — "How can I believe that it is the intention of France to bind herself firmly to me? I know that your envoy at Mayence makes insinuations against my interests, and that a peace is proposed with the Queen of Hungary, involving the reëstablishment of the emperor and an indemnification at my expense."

VOLTAIRE. — "I dare believe that this accusation is an artifice of the Austrians, a practice too common with them. Did they not calumniate you in the same manner last May? Did they not publish in Holland that you had made an offer to the Queen of Hungary to join her against France?"

THE KING (lowering his eyes). — "I swear to you that nothing is more false. What could I gain by it? Such a falsehood destroys itself."

VOLTAIRE. — "Very well, sire; why, then, not openly unite with France and the emperor against the common enemy, who hates you and calumniates you both equally? What ally can you have but France?"

THE KING. — "You are right. You know, also, that I am endeavoring to serve France; you are aware of what I am doing in Holland. But I cannot act openly until I am sure of being seconded by the empire, to which end I am now laboring; and this is the real object of the journey I shall make to Bayreuth in eight or ten days. I wish to be assured that some, at least, of the princes of the empire — such as Palatine, Hesse, Wurtemberg, Cologne, and Stettin — would furnish a contingent to the emperor."

VOLTAIRE. — "Sire, ask their signature only, and begin by making your brave Prussians take the field."

THE KING. — "I do not wish to recommence the war; but I confess I should be flattered to be the pacificator of the empire, and to humiliate a little the King of England, who wishes to give law to Germany."

VOLTAIRE. — "You can do it. Only this glory is wanting to you, and I hope that France will owe peace to her own arms and your negotiations. The vigor she will show will doubtless increase your goodwill. Allow me to ask what you would do if the King of France should demand succor from you by virtue of your treaty with him?"

THE KING. — "I should be obliged to excuse myself, and to reply that the treaty was annulled by what I have since done with regard to the Queen of Hungary. At present I can serve the emperor and the King of France only by negotiating."

VOLTAIRE. — "Negotiate, then, sire, as fortunately as you have

fought; and suffer me to say to you, what all the earth says, that the Queen of Hungary only awaits the favorable moment to attack Silesia."

The King. — "My four fortresses will be finished before Austria can send against me two regiments. I have a hundred and fifty thousand combatants; I shall have then two hundred thousand. I flatter myself that my system of military discipline, which I consider the best in Europe, will always triumph over the Hungarian troops. If the Queen of Hungary attempts to recover Silesia, she will force me to take Bohemia from her. I fear nothing from Russia; the Czarina is forever devoted to me since the last conspiracy fomented by Botta [envoy of Maria Theresa] and by the English. I advise her to send the young Ivan and his mother to Siberia, as well as my brother-in-law, with whom I have always been dissatisfied, and who has always been governed by the Austrians."[1]

At this point the king was notified that the musicians were ready to begin the concert. Voltaire followed him to the music-room, and the conversation ended; to be renewed, however, on several succeeding days. The king could scarcely have been more explicit or more frank; and, probably, an experienced diplomatist would not have pressed him farther. But Voltaire had private as well as public reasons for making of this embassy an unquestionable and striking success. He desired something in the king's handwriting to take home with him; and, to this end, he wrote the well-known series of questions, leaving a wide margin on the paper for the king's written comments. Frederic, obliged to disappoint the pertinacious envoy, appended ridiculous or evasive answers. "Is it not clear," asked Voltaire, "that France displays vigor and wisdom?" The king wrote in the margin, "I admire the wisdom of France, but God keep me from ever imitating it." Voltaire alluded to the burning desire of the Austrians to attack Silesia. Frederic wrote, "They will be received, *biribi*, in the style of Barbary, *mon ami!*" The king would not commit himself upon paper. In conversation he continued to discuss the situation in a manner which his subsequent conduct showed to be sincere. Their final conversation turned upon King George II. of England, whom Frederic did not love. The king's last word was this: —

[1] Voltaire to Amelot, September 3, 1743.

"George is Frederic's uncle; but George is not King of Prussia. Let France declare war against England, and I march!"[1]

To oblige the envoy, the king wrote him a long letter *to show*, eulogizing France, complimenting her king, and commending Voltaire as a loyal subject and admirable citizen. Frederic still longed to possess him; and it is evident from scattered intimations that the envoy endeavored to turn this passionate desire to account. I think he said in substance to the King of Prussia, "Let me be the means of bringing succor to France, make my mission brilliantly successful, and what can I not ask of the king, *mon maître?* Say, for example, that I should wish the obliging Marquis du Châtelet appointed ambassador at your majesty's court, with one Voltaire as guest of the family, resident at Berlin for many years, and perhaps always!" Frederic, on his part, renewed all his former offers. "France," he wrote, a few days before Voltaire's departure, "has passed hitherto for the asylum of unfortunate kings; I wish my capital to become the temple of great men. Come, my dear Voltaire, and dictate all that can be agreeable to you. I wish to give you pleasure; and to oblige a man it is necessary to enter into his way of thinking. Choose a suite of apartments or a house; rule whatever is necessary to you for the agreeableness and the luxury of life; make your condition such as your happiness requires; it shall be mine to provide for the rest. You shall be always free and entirely master of your destiny."

In his mania to have him, the king descended to a trick which, doubtless, he regarded as a kind of harmless practical joke, but which few readers will be able to see in that light. Voltaire, as we have observed, caused some of Frederic's letters to fall into the hands of the Bishop of Mirepoix. Before leaving Prussia, he discovered that the king was taking precisely the same liberty with certain letters of his, in which the "mitred donkey of Mirepoix" was spoken of with infinite contempt. "Here," wrote Frederic, August 17, 1743, to his favorite, Count de Rottembourg, then visiting Paris, — "you have a morsel of a letter of Voltaire's, which I beg you will get delivered to the Bishop of Mirepoix in some roundabout way,

[1] Mémoires. 2 Œuvres de Voltaire, 56.

without either you or me appearing in the business. My intention is to embroil Voltaire so thoroughly in France that there will remain no part for him to take but to come to me."[1] The morsel inclosed read thus: —

"This ugly Mirepoix is as hard, as fanatical, as imperious, as the Cardinal de Fleury was suave, accommodating, polite. Oh, how he will make that good man regretted!"

Ten days later, the king sent to Count de Rottembourg some verses of Voltaire's upon Mirepoix, and charged him to get them secretly delivered to the bishop; for, added the king, "I wish to embroil Voltaire forever with France; it would be the means of having him at Berlin." These verses, besides heaping contempt upon Mirepoix, contained a line that seemed to speak of Louis XV. as "the most stupid of kings." This was going far, even for a monarch. Voltaire, who had partisans or friends everywhere, was promptly informed of this procedure, and did not approve it. He was extremely indignant. If he had amused himself a little by putting some jocular paragraphs of Frederic where the bishop could see them, he did not consider the game equal between a king with two hundred thousand men at his command and a poet who was obliged always to serve and charm his country at the risk of a dungeon. Strange to relate, Frederic was *astonished* that he should take the flattering treason amiss. "Voltaire," he wrote to Rottembourg, "has unearthed, I know not how, the *little* treason we have played him. He is *strangely* piqued at it. He will get over it, I hope."

He pouted for a while, it appears, and then forgave the little treason. Luckily, it had been a thing agreed upon that Mirepoix was to be "written down an ass;" and thus he was able to make it up with his own court. Nor was he ill pleased to let the French ministry know how intensely he was desired at the Prussian court. "Not being able," he wrote to M. Amelot, "to gain me otherwise, the king thought to acquire me by destroying me in France; but I swear to you that I would rather live in a town of Switzerland than enjoy at this price the perilous favor of a man capable of putting treason into friendship itself."

But he was not quite so angry then as these words imply.

[1] 25 Œuvres de Frédéric le Grand, 523, 525, 527, 528.

He brought his Prussian journey to a happy close by accompanying the king to the court of his sister, the Margravine of Bayreuth, where he passed fourteen days of sumptuous and elegant festivity. Operas, comedies, concerts, hunts, suppers, filled up the hours. The king's sisters, Ulrique and Amelia, as well as Wilhelmina, were there, all sharing their brother's enthusiasm for the guest, all owing part of their mental development to him. Voltaire had never been so fêted and caressed. He left behind him at Bayreuth, as a memorial of those enchanting days, three little poems, unequaled in their kind in all the literature of the drawing-room. These trifles are so exquisite that the plainest prose of them leaves a pleasing impression upon the mind: —

"To the Princess Ulrique: Often a little truth mingles with the grossest falsehood. Last night, in the error of a dream, to the rank of kings I was mounted. I loved you, princess, and dared tell you so. The gods, at my waking, did not take all from me. I have lost only my empire."

"To the Princesses Ulrique and Amelia: If Paris should come upon the earth to judge between your beautiful eyes, he would cut the apple in two, and not cause any war."

"To the Princesses Ulrique, Amelia, and Wilhelmina: Pardon, charming Ulrique! pardon, beautiful Amelia! I had thought to love only you for the rest of my life, and to serve only under your laws; but, at length, I hear and I see that adorable sister upon whose steps Love follows. Ah, it is not wronging the Three Graces to love all three of them!"

The Princess Ulrique ventured to send him a reply in verse and prose. She, too, had had a dream: "Apollo, with majestic port, gentle and gracious, accompanied by his Nine Sisters," appeared before her, to rebuke her for replying to such verses only in dull prose. The god dictated; she wrote: *His* dream had been a mere delusion; it was *Emilie* who had appeared to him, not Ulrique; and so he would discover as soon as he had returned to Brussels. What a difference between Ulrique and them! They had placed *themselves* on the heights of Helicon; they had made *themselves* famous; but she owed all to her ancestors. In this tone Voltaire and the princess continued to correspond until she went away to be Queen of Sweden.

After four months' absence, he set his face toward home,

bearing with him many evidences of the favor in which he was held; among others, a gold box from the king, in which were several medals in gold, representing Frederic giving peace to his subjects. Long as he had been absent, still he lingered several days at the court of the Duke of Brunswick, writing few letters and short to that Emilie of his, who was chafing and anxious at Brussels. She wrote to D'Argental that she no longer knew the man upon whom her happiness depended. His letters and his behavior were equally strange to her. "He is absolutely drunk; he spends twelve days in going from Berlin to the Hague; he is mad for Germany and courts; he stayed fifteen days at Bayreuth; he has passed fifteen days without writing to me; and for two months past I have learned his designs from ambassadors and gazettes. Such conduct would, perhaps, detach any one but me." But the truant returned at length, and all was forgiven. He had had a painful journey, he said, but his return overwhelmed him with happiness; he had never found his Emilie so amiable and so far above the King of Prussia.

Soon they went to Paris together; he to give details of his mission, and to receive, perhaps, the glory and reward which kings bestow upon subjects returning from hard and not unsuccessful service. But he did not receive either glory or reward. The Duchess de Châteauroux was offended because the negotiation had not passed through her hands; she had taken a dislike to the person of M. Amelot, minister for foreign affairs, because he stammered; she detested him, also, because he was controlled by M. de Maurepas, her mortal foe; and, when Voltaire reached Paris, she was in full intrigue to expel the odious stammerer. A few weeks later, M. Amelot was dismissed, and Voltaire was "enveloped in his disfavor."

After a month's stay at Paris, madame and himself returned to Brussels, where they resumed their lawsuit and their studies, after seven months' interruption. On the opening of spring they were at Cirey, its new gardens all blooming with the beauty which their taste had imagined. Few visitors enlivened this retreat, it is true, but they thought, perhaps, that they were now settled for a long period of generous toil and elegant pleasure. President Hénault looked in upon them again in the spring of 1744, and found them immersed in intellectua.

employments, with madame's new tutor in mathematics their only companion. "If," wrote Hénault, in his Memoirs, "one should make a fancy picture of a delicious retreat, an asylum of peace, of union, of calm of soul, of amenity, of talents, of mutual esteem, of the attractions of philosophy joined to the charms of poetry, he would have painted Cirey: a building simple and elegant from the ground-floor up; cabinets filled with the apparatus of mechanics and chemistry; Voltaire in bed, beginning, continuing, finishing works of all kinds."

CHAPTER XLII.

VOLTAIRE AT THE COURT OF FRANCE.

After this interesting experience of court life in a foreign country, where the king was king, he was to become a courtier at Versailles, where the man who governed the king's mistress was king.

Again it was the Duke de Richelieu, First Gentleman of the Chamber, who broke in upon the elevated pursuits of Cirey, and called him to lower tasks and less congenial scenes. The royal children were coming of age. The marriage of the Dauphin to the Infanta of Spain, long ago agreed upon, was soon to be celebrated, the prince having passed his sixteenth year, and it devolved upon the First Gentleman to arrange the marriage festival. This was no light task; for Louis XIV. had accustomed France to the most elaborate and magnificent *fêtes*. Not content with such splendors as mere wealth can everywhere procure, that gorgeous monarch loved to enlist all the arts and all the talents, exhibiting to his guests divertisements written by Molière, performed with original music, and with scenery painted by artists. Several of his festivals have to this day a certain celebrity in France, and have left traces still noticeable. There is a public ground in Paris, opposite the Tuileries, which is called the Place of the Carousal. It was so named because it was the scene of one of this king's *fêtes*, in which five bodies of horsemen, or quadrilles, as they were called, took part. One of these bodies were dressed and equipped as Roman knights, and they were led by the king in person. His brother, the Duke of Orleans, commanded a body of Persian cavalry; the Prince of Condé, a splendid band of Turks; the Duke of Guise, a company of Peruvian horse; and a son of Condé shone at the head of East Indian horsemen in gorgeous array. Imagine these five bodies of horse galloping and manœuvring, entering and de-

parting, charging and retreating, like circus riders in an extremely large and splendid tent; and in the midst, on a lofty platform, three queens in splendid robes, the mother of Louis, the wife of Louis, and the widow of Charles I., who lived and died the guest of the King of France. There were grand doings at this festival. There were tournaments, games of skill and daring, stately processions, concerts, plays, and buffooneries, with a ball at the close.

That pageant, splendid as it was, was "effaced," as the French say, by one which the king gave only two years after at Versailles, probably the most sumptuous thing of the kind ever seen. On the 5th of May, the most beautiful month of the year in France, the king rode out to Versailles with all his court, which then included six hundred persons, each attended by retainers and servants, the whole numbering more than two thousand individuals and as many horses. The festival was to last seven days, and the king defrayed the expenses of every one of his guests. In the park and gardens of Versailles miracles had been wrought. Theatres, amphitheatres, porticoes, pavilions, seemed to have sprung into being at the waving of an enchanter's wand. On the first day there was a kind of review, or march-past, of all who were to take part in the games and tourneys. Under a triumphal arch the three queens appeared again, resplendent, each attended by one hundred ladies, who were attired in the brilliant manner of the period; past these marched heralds pages, squires, carrying the devices and shields of the knights, as well as banners upon which verses were written in letters of gold. The knights followed, in burnished armor and bright plumes, the king at their head in the character of Roger, a famous knight of old. All the crown diamonds glittered upon his coat and the trappings of his horse. Both he and the animal sparkled and blazed in the May sun; and we can well imagine that a handsome young man, riding with perfect grace the most beautiful of horses, must have been a very pretty spectacle, despite so much glitter. When this procession of squires and knights had passed and made their obeisance to the queens, a huge car followed, eighteen feet high, fifteen wide, and twenty-four long, representing the Car of the Sun, — an immense vehicle, all gilding and splendor. Behind this car

came groups exhibiting the Four Ages, of Gold, of Silver, of Brass, and of Iron; and these were followed by representations of the celestial signs, the seasons, and the hours. All this, the spectators inform us, was admirably performed to the sound of beautiful music; and, now and then, persons would step from the procession, and the music would cease, while they recited poems, written for the occasion, before the queens. Imagine shepherds, blacksmiths, farmers, harvesters, vine-dressers, fawns, dryads, Pans, Dianas, Apollos, marching by, and representing the various scenes of life and industry!

The procession ends at last. Night falls. With wondrous rapidity four thousand great torches are lighted in an inclosure fitted up as a banqueting place. Two hundred of the persons who had figured in the procession now bring in various articles of food: the seasons, the vine-dressers, the shepherds, the harvesters, each bear the food appropriate to them; while Pan and Diana advance upon a moving mountain, and alight to superintend the distribution of the exquisite food which had been brought in. Behind the tables was an orchestra of musicians, and when the feast was done the pleasures of the day ended with a ball. For a whole week the festival continued, the sports varied every day. There were tourneys, pageants, hunts, shooting at a mark, and spearing the ring. Four times the king gained the prize, and offered it to be competed for again. There were a great number of court fools at this festival, as we still find clowns at a circus. Indeed, when we attend a liberally appointed circus we are looking upon a show resembling in many particulars the grand doings in the park of Versailles when Louis XIV. entertained his court and figured as chief of the riders.

Most of the performances could have been procured by money lavishly spent; and, in order to reproduce them, the Duke de Richelieu needed little assistance from the arts. But there were items of the programme which redeemed the character of this festival, and caused it to be remembered by the susceptible people of France with pride. Molière composed for it a kind of show play, called the "Princesse d'Elide," a vehicle for music, ballet, and costume, with here and there a spice of his comic talent. A farce of his, the "Forced Marriage," was also played; and the first three acts of his "Tar-

tuffe," the greatest effort of French dramatic genius in that age, if not in any age, were performed for the first time. There was only one man in France who could help a "First Gentleman" to features of the coming *fête* at all resembling these; and to him that First Gentleman applied. Voltaire entered into the scheme with zeal. In April, 1744, Cirey all blooming with flowers and verdure, he began to write his festive divertisement, the "Princesse de Navarre," the hero of which was a kind of Spanish Duke de Richelieu. "I am making," he wrote, "a divertisement for a Dauphin and Dauphiness whom I shall not divert; but I wish to produce something pretty, gay, tender, worthy of the Duke de Richelieu, director of the *fête*." It was his chief summer work, and he labored at it with an assiduity that would have sufficed to produce three new tragedies. He very happily laid the scene of his play in an ancient château close to the borders of the Spanish province of Navarre, — an expedient which enabled him to group upon the stage both Frenchmen and Spaniards, with their effective contrasts of costume, and to present to the Spanish bride and her court pleasing traits of their own countrymen. The poet and the First Gentleman arranged the processions, the ballets, the tableaux, the *fête* within a *fête;* exchanging many long letters, and pondering many devices. There is good comic writing in this piece; and there are two characters, a rustic Spanish baron and his extremely simple-minded daughter, that are worthy of a better kind of play and occasion.

This was the year in which the King of France first braved the hardships of the field, accompanied by his mistress, the Duchess de Châteauroux, and attended by that surprising retinue of courtiers and comedians, often described. I need not pause to relate how, after being present at warlike operations, he fell dangerously sick of a fever; how the mistress and the First Gentleman took possession of the king's quarters, and barred the door against priests and princes; how, as the king grew worse, the alarmed mistress tried to come to a compromise with the royal confessor, the keeper of the king's conscience, saying to him, in substance, "Let me go away without scandal, that is, without being *sent* away, and I will quietly let you into the king's chamber;" how the cautious Jesuit

contrived to get through a long interview without saying either yes or no to this proposal; how, at length, when the king seemed near his end, she was terrified into yielding, and the king, fearing to lose his absolution and join some of the bad kings in the other world, sent her a positive command to depart, as if she had been, what the priest officially styled her, a concubine; how the king, having recovered, humbly courted her return, calling upon her in person at her house; and how, while she affected to hesitate, and dictated terms of direst vengeance, even the exile of every priest, courtier, and minister who had taken the least part in her disgrace, she died of mingled rage, mortification, and triumph, leaving both the king and the First Gentleman perfectly consolable. Upon all that we need not here dilate; it is related with modesty and force by the brothers De Goncourt in their work upon the "Mistresses of Louis XV.," a precious series of illustrations of the system of personal government.

The impressive fact is that none of these things impaired the spell of the king's divinity. During the crisis of his fever all France seemed panic-stricken; and when he recovered, the manifestations of joy were such as to astonish the king himself, inured as he was to every form and degree of adulation from his childhood. "What have I done," cried the poor man, "to be loved so?" It was at this time that he received his name of Louis the Well-Beloved, by which it was presumed that he would go to posterity, along with Louis the Fat and Philip the Long, titles so helpful to childish memory. On his return to Paris in September, 1744, "crowned with victory" and recovered from the borders of the tomb, the *fêtes* were of such magnitude and splendor that Madame du Châtelet came to Paris to witness them, with her poet in her train. He brought his "Princesse de Navarre" with him, however, and was soon in daily consultation with composer, ministers, First Gentleman, and friends as to the resources of an extemporized theatre.

A curious street adventure befell madame and himself on the night of the grand fire-works, which they rode in from a château near the city to witness They found all the world in the streets. Voltaire gave an account of their night's exploits to the President Hénault, whose visit to Cirey they now

returned in an unusual manner: "There were two thousand backing carriages in three files; there were the outcries of two or three hundred thousand men, scattered among those carriages; there were drunkards, fights with fists, streams of wine and tallow flowing upon the people, a mounted police to augment the embroglio; and, by way of climax to our delights, his Royal Highness [Duke de Chartres] was returning peacefully to the Palais-Royal with his great carriages, his guards, his pages; and all this unable either to go back or advance until three in the morning. I was with Madame du Châtelet. Her coachman, who had never before been in Paris, was about boldly to break her upon the wheel. Covered as she was with diamonds, she alighted, calling upon me to follow, got through the crowd without being either plundered or hustled, entered your house [Rue St. Honoré], sent for some roast chicken at the corner restaurant, and drank your health very pleasantly in that house to which every one wishes to see you return."

It was a busy time with him during the next six months, arranging the details of the *fête*, with Rameau the composer, with scene-painters, with the Duke de Richelieu, and the Marquis d'Argenson. We see him cutting down eight verses to four, and swelling four verses to eight, to meet the exigencies of the music. We see him deep in converse with Richelieu upon the complicated scenes of his play, — suggesting, altering, abandoning, curtailing numberless devices of the stage manager.

On this occasion, also, as before going to Prussia, he took care to secure some compensation in advance. It was not his intention to play courtier for nothing. He was resolved to improve this opportunity, and to endeavor so to strengthen himself at court that henceforth he could sleep in peace at his abode, in Paris, or in the country, fearless of the Ane of Mirepoix. To get the dull, shy, sensualized king on his side was a material point with him. He wrote a poem on the "Events of the Year" (1744), in which the exploits of the king upon the tented field and his joyful recovery from sickness were celebrated in the true laureate style. He also took measures to have this poem shown to the king by the Cardinal de Tencin, "in a moment of good-humor." He made known to two of his friends in the ministry, M. Orry and the Marquis d'Ar

genson, precisely what he wanted. He wanted an office which would protect him against confessors, bishops, and Desfontaines, — say, for example, gentleman-in-ordinary of the king's chamber, a charge of trifling emolument, less duty, and great distinction. He would then be a member of the king's household, not to be molested on slight pretext by a Mirepoix, nor to be calumniated with impunity by a journalist. But since such offices were seldom vacant he asked to be appointed at once writer of history (*historiographe*) to the king, at a nominal salary of four hundred francs a year. M. Orry thought this very modest and suitable; the Marquis d'Argenson was of the same opinion; and both engaged to aid in accomplishing his wishes. If he could add to these posts an armchair in the French Academy, which in good time he also meant to try for, he thought he might pursue his natural vocation in his native land without serious and constant apprehension.

But, first, the *fête!* That must succeed as a preliminary. In January, 1745, he took up his abode at Versailles to superintend the rehearsals, conscious of the incongruity of his employment. "I am here," he wrote to Thieriot, "braving Fortune in her own temple; at Versailles I play a part similar to that of an atheist in a church." To Cideville, also: "Do you not pity a poor devil who at fifty is a king's buffoon, and who is more embarrassed with musicians, decorators, actors, singers, and dancers than the eight or nine electors will soon be in making a German Cæsar? I rush from Paris to Versailles; I compose verses in the post-chaise; I have to praise the king highly, Madame the Dauphiness delicately, the royal family sweetly. I must satisfy the court, and not displease the city."

In the very crisis of the long preparation, February 18, 1745, seven days before the festival, Voltaire's Jansenist of a brother, the "Abbé Arouet," Receiver-of-Fees to the Chamber of Accounts, died at Paris, aged two months less than sixty years. The brothers, as we know, had been long ago estranged, and had rarely met of late years. The parish register, still accessible, attests that the funeral was attended, February 19th, by "François-Marie Arouet de Voltaire, *bourgeois* of Paris;" not yet gentleman-in-ordinary. The receiver-of-

fees died, as he had lived, in what was called the odor of sanctity; presenting to the view of young and old that painful caricature of goodness which has for some centuries, in more than one country, made virtue more difficult than it naturally is. From his will, which also exists, we learn that, if he did not disinherit his brother, he came as near it as a French brother could without doing violence to the sentiment and custom of his country. After giving legacies to cousins, friends, and servants, he leaves one half the bulk of his estate to his nephew and nieces, and the other half to his brother; but with a difference. Voltaire was to enjoy his half "in usufruct only," the capital to fall finally "to his nephew and nieces aforesaid." He took care, also, to prevent his brother from gaining anything by the decease of any of the heirs. As the receiver-of-fees, besides bequeathing his valuable office to a relative, died worth, as French investigators compute, about two hundred thousand francs, Voltaire received an increase to his income of perhaps six thousand francs a year.[1]

From his brother's grave, without waiting to learn these particulars, he was obliged to go post-haste to Versailles, towards which all eyes were now directed. The marriage festival, a tumult of all the splendors, began February 23, 1745. The "Princess of Navarre" succeeded to admiration. A vast and beautiful edifice had risen, at the command of Richelieu, in the horse-training ground near the palace of Versailles, so constructed that it could serve as a theatre on one evening and a ball-room on the next, both equally magnificent and complete. The stage was fifty-six feet in depth; and, as the boxes were so arranged as to exhibit the audience to itself in the most effective and brilliant manner, the words spoken on the stage could not be always perfectly heard. But this was not so important, since the play was chiefly designed as a vehicle for music, dancing, costume, and picture. At six in the evening the king entered and took the seat prepared for him in the middle of the theatre, followed, in due order, by his family and court, arrayed in the gorgeous fashion of the time. These placed themselves around him, a splendid group, in the midst of a great theatre filled with the nobility of the kingdom, all sumptuous and glittering. The author of the play about to

[1] Voltaire à Cirey, page 438. Ménage et Finances de Voltaire, page 44.

be performed was himself thrilled by the picturesque magnificence of the spectacle which the audience presented, and he regretted that a greater number of the people of France could not have been present to behold the superb array of princes and princesses, noble lords and ladies, adorned by masterpieces of decorative art, which the beauty of the ladies "effaced." He wished that more people could observe the noble and becoming joy that filled every heart and beamed in all those lovely eyes.

But, since nothing can be perfect, not even in France, this most superb audience was so much elated with itself that it could not stop talking. There was a buzz and hum of conversation, reminding the anxious author of a hive of bees humming and buzzing around the queen. The curtain rose; but still they talked. The play, however, being a *mélange* of poetry, song, music, ballet, and dialogue, everything was enjoyed except the good verses, here and there, which could scarcely be caught by distant ears. Every talent in such a piece meets its due of approval except that of the poet, who imagines the whole before any part of it exists. At half past nine the curtain fell upon the closing scene; when the audience, retiring to the grounds without, found the entire façade of the palace and adjacent structures illuminated. All were enchanted. The king himself, the hardest man in Europe to amuse, was so well pleased that he ordered the play to be repeated on another evening of the festival. "The king is grateful to me," wrote Voltaire to his guardian angel, D'Argental. "The Mirepoix cannot harm me. What more do I need?"

He was exhausted with the long strain upon his nervous system. "So tired am I," he wrote to Thieriot, "that I have neither hands, feet, nor head, and write to you by the hand of another." But he soon had the consolation of receiving the king's promise of the next vacancy among the gentlemen-in-ordinary, and his immediate appointment as writer of history at an annual salary of two thousand francs. Thus the year consumed in these courtly toils, he thought, was not without its compensations. Nor did he relax his vigilance, nor give ministers peace, until these offices were securely his by letters patent and the king's signature. His brevet of *histo-*

riographe was signed by the king April 1st, and the salary began January 1, 1745. The document ran thus: —

"To-day, April 1, 1745. The king being at Versailles, taking into consideration that the recompenses which his majesty accords to those who devote themselves to the study of letters contribute to their progress by the emulation which they excite, no one has appeared to his majesty more worthy to receive marks of his benevolence and to be distinguished by an honorable title than the Sieur Arouet de Voltaire, who, by the superiority of his talents and his steady application, has made the most rapid progress in all the sciences that he has cultivated, and of which his works, received with just applause, are the fruit. To this effect his majesty has retained and retains the said Sieur de Voltaire in quality of historiographer of France, permits him to take the title and quality of the same in all documents and papers whatsoever, desiring him to enjoy all the honors and prerogatives which persons hitherto invested with such titles have enjoyed and had a right to enjoy, together with the sum of two thousand francs of emolument, payable annually during his life, beginning with the 1st of January last, according to the conditions and ordinances which will be drawn up by virtue of the present brevet, as well as to certify its validity.

"Signed, "Louis."[1]

When he accepted this office he was far from anticipating an increase of labor through it. But, in truth, no poet laureate ever won his annual pipe of sack by labors so arduous as those by which Voltaire earned this salary of two thousand francs. Several volumes of history attest his diligence. During the first two or three years of his holding the place, he was historiographer, laureate, writer of royal letters and ministerial dispatches, complimenter of the royal mistress, and occasionally court dramatist and master of the revels.

The marriage festivities at Versailles drew to a close, and all that brilliant crowd dispersed. From the splendors of the court he was suddenly called away to attend the son of Madame du Châtelet through the small-pox. He assisted to save the future Duke du Châtelet for the guillotine, applying to his case his own experience of the two hundred pints of lemonade. That duty done and his forty days of quarantine fulfilled, he returned to court, where the minister for foreign affairs had a piece of work for his pen. Elizabeth, Empress of Russia, had offered her mediation to the King of France,

[1] Voltaire à Cirey, page 445.

and the task of writing the king's reply, accepting the offer, was assigned to Voltaire, who performed it in the loftiest style of sentimental politics. If Louis XV. took the trouble to glance over this composition he must have been pleased to find himself saying that "kings can aspire to no other glory than that of promoting the happiness of their subjects," and swearing that he "had never taken up arms except with a view to promote the interests of peace." It was an amiable, effusive letter, in the taste of the period, being written by the man who made the taste of the period. Later in the summer he drafted a longer dispatch to the government of Holland, remonstrating against its purpose of sending aid to the King of England against the Pretender. It was he also who wrote the manifesto to be published in Great Britain on the landing of the French expedition under the Duke de Richelieu, in aid of the Pretender. Whenever, indeed, during 1745, 1746, and 1747, the ministry had occasion for a skillful pen, Voltaire was employed. We perceive in this part of his correspondence the mingled horror and contempt that war excited in his mind. "Give us peace, Monseigneur," is the burden of his cry to the Marquis d'Argenson in confidential notes; and we see him, with his usual easy assurance, suggesting such marriages for the royal children as would "render France happy by a beautiful peace, and your name immortal despite the fools."

Whatever philosophers may think of war, few citizens can resist the contagious delirium of victory after national defeat and humiliation. The King of France again, in 1745, was posed by his advisers in the part of conqueror. From a hill, he and the Dauphin looked on while Marshal Saxe won the decisive and fruitful victory of Fontenoy over the English Duke of Cumberland and the forces of the allies, with a loss of eight thousand men on each side. Voltaire received the news at Paris, late in the evening, direct from D'Argenson, who was with the king in the field. He dashed upon paper a congratulatory note to the minister: "Ah! the lovely task for your historian! In three hundred years the kings of France have done nothing so glorious. I am mad with joy! Good-night, Monseigneur!"

In a few days came that letter from D'Argenson in reply to Monsieur the Historian" which has long been justly re-

garded as one of the curiosities of the *régime*. It affords matter both for the laughing and the crying philosopher.

"It was a glorious sight [wrote M. d'Argenson to Voltaire] to see the king and the Dauphin writing upon a drum, surrounded by the conquerors and the conquered, the prisoners, the dying and the dead. I had the honor to meet the king on Sunday near the field of battle. When I arrived at the camp from Paris I was told that the king was gone an airing. I immediately procured a horse, and came up to his majesty near a place which was in view of the enemy's camp. I then learned, for the first time, what his majesty's intentions were, and I never saw a man so cheerful as he was upon the occasion. Our conversation turned precisely on a point of history that you have discussed in four lines, — Which of our kings gained the last royal battle? — and I assure you that his majesty's courage did not wrong his judgment, nor his judgment his memory.

"We then went to lie down upon the straw. Never was there a ball night more gay, or so many *bon-mots*. We reposed between the interruptions of couriers and aids-de-camp. The king sang a very droll song of several verses. As for the Dauphin, he went to the battle as to a hare-hunting, saying, 'What is all this?' A cannon-ball struck in the clay, and bespattered a man near the king. Our masters laughed very heartily at the man who was bespattered. One of my brother's grooms, who was behind, received a wound in the head with a musket ball.

"It is certainly true, and without flattery, that the king gained the battle by his own steadiness and resolution. You will see different accounts and details of this affair. You will be told of a terrible moment, in which we beheld a second edition of Dettingen, where the French were prostrated before the English. Their rolling fire, which resembled the flames of hell, did, I confess, stupefy the most unconcerned spectators, and we began to despair for the state.

"Some of our generals, who have more heart and courage than abilities, gave very prudent advice. They dispatched orders all the way to Lisle; they doubled the king's guard; they had everything packed up. The king laughed at all this, and, going from the left to the centre, asked for the *corps-de-reserve* and the brave Lowendahl: but there was no occasion. A charge was made by a sham *corps-de-reserve*, consisting of the same cavalry which had already made an unsuccessful attack, the king's household, the carbineers, those of the French guards who had not advanced, and the Irish brigade, who are excellent troops, especially when they march against the English and Hanoverians.

"Your friend, M. de Richelieu, is another Bayard; it was he who

gave and put into execution the advice to attack the infantry like hunters or foragers, pell-mell, the hand lowered, the arm shortened, masters, servants, officers, cavalry, infantry, all together. Nothing can withstand this French vivacity, which is so much spoken of; and in ten minutes the battle was gained by this unexpected stroke. The heavy English battalions turned their backs upon us; and, in short, there were fourteen thousand of them killed.[1]

"The heavy artillery had indisputably the honor of this terrible slaughter; there never were so many or such large cannon fired in one battle as at the battle of Fontenoy; there were no less than a hundred. It would seem, sir, as if the poor enemy had willingly permitted everything to reach the army that could be destructive to them, the cannon from Douay, the *gens d'armes*, and the musketeers.

"There is one anecdote of the last attack I mentioned, which I hope will not be forgotten. The Dauphin, from a natural impulse, drew his sword in the most graceful manner, and insisted upon charging; but he was requested to desist. After all, to mention the bad and the good, I observed a habit, too easily acquired, of looking with tranquillity on the dying and the dead, and on the reeking wounds which were to be seen on every part of the field of battle. I own that my heart failed, and that I stood in need of a cordial. I attentively observed our young heroes, who seemed too indifferent upon this occasion. I am fearful that this inhuman carnage may harden their dispositions through the course of their lives.

"The triumph was the finest thing in the world: God save the king; hats in the air and upon bayonets; the compliments of the sovereign to his troops; visiting the entrenchments, villages, and redoubts; joy, glory, and tenderness! But the ground of the picture was human blood and fragments of human flesh!

"At the end of the triumph the king honored me with a conversation on the subject of peace, and I have dispatched some couriers.

"The king was much entertained yesterday in the trenches; they fired a great deal at him, but he remained there three hours. I was employed in my closet, which is my trench; for I confess to you that I have been much retarded in business by all these dissipations. I trembled at every shot I heard fired. I went the day before yesterday to see the trenches, but I cannot say there is anything curious in them in the day-time. We shall have the Te Deum sung to-day under a tent, and there will be a general *feu-de-joie* of the whole army, which the king will go to see from Mont Trinity. It will be very fine.

"Adieu! Present my humble respects to Madame du Châtelet."

[1] There were indeed fourteen thousand men missing at the muster, but about six thousand returned the same day

Voltaire read this epistle with the delight becoming a courtier of the period, and set to work instantly to turn it into heroic verse. His poem, "Fontenoy," of three hundred lines or more, was scattered over the delirious city damp from the press, and in a few days was declaimed in every town of the kingdom. Edition after edition was sold. "Five editions in ten days!" The author, as his custom was, added, erased, altered, corrected; offending some by omitting their names, offending others by inserting names odious to them; working all one night to make the poem a less imperfect expression of the national joy; not forgetting to dedicate it to the king, and to get a copy placed in his hands. "The king deigns to be content with it," he wrote. Thousands of copies were sold in the first month, and there were two burlesques of the poem in the second.

In the very ecstasy of the general enthusiasm, he still repeats, in a private note to D'Argenson, "Peace, Monseigneur, peace, and you are a great man, even *among* the fools!"

He was now in high favor, even with the king, who had said to Marshal Saxe that the "Princesse de Navarre" was above criticism. The marshal himself gave Madame du Châtelet this agreeable information. "After that," said the author, "I must regard the king as the greatest connoisseur in his kingdom." He renewed his intimacy with his early patron, the Duchess du Maine, who still held court at the château of Sceaux, near by. By great good luck, too, as doubtless he regarded it at the time, he was acquainted with the new mistress, Pompadour, before she was Pompadour. He knew her when she was only the most bewitching young wife in France, cold to her rich and amorous young husband, and striving by every art that such women know to catch the king's eye as he hunted in the royal forest near her abode. Already, even while the king was sleeping on histrionic straw on the field near Fontenoy, it was settled that the dream of her life was to be realized. She was to be Petticoat III.

This summer, during the king's absence at the seat of war, Voltaire was frequently at her house, and had become established in her favor. She was a gifted, brilliant, ambitious woman, of cold temperament, who courted this infamy as men seek honorable posts which make them conspicuous, powerful,

and envied. In well-ordered nations, accomplished men win such places by thirty years' well-directed toil in the public service. She won her place, and kept it nineteen years, by amusing the least amusable of men, and gratifying a sensuality with which she had no sympathy whatever. She paid a high price. In return, she governed France, enriched her family, promoted her friends, exiled her enemies, owned half a dozen châteaux, and left an estate of thirty-six millions of francs.[1]

With such and so many auxiliaries supporting his new position, the historiographer of France, if he had been a younger man, might have felt safe. But he knew his ground. Under personal government nations usually have two masters, the king and the priest, between whom there is an alliance, offensive and defensive. He had gained some favor with the king, the king's ministers, and the king's mistress. But the priest remained hostile. The king being a coward, a fit of the colic might frighten him into turning out the mistress and letting in the confessor; and, suppose the colic successful, instantly a pious and bigoted Dauphin became king, with a Mirepoix as chief priest! Moreover, to depend upon the favor of either king or mistress is worse than basing the prosperity of an industrial community upon a changeable fraction in a tariff bill.

Revolving such thoughts in an anxious mind, Voltaire conceived a notable scheme for going behind the Mirepoix, and silencing him forever by capturing the favor of the Pope. Benedict XIV. was a scholar, a gentleman of excellent temper, and no bigot. He owed his election to his agreeable qualities. When the cardinals were exhausted by days and nights of fruitless balloting, he said, with his usual gayety and good humor, "Why waste so much time in vain debates and researches? Do you want a saint? Elect Gotti. A politician? Aldovrandi. A good fellow? Take me." And they took him.

It was soon after the close of the *fête* at Versailles that Voltaire consulted the Marquis d'Argenson, minister for foreign affairs, upon his project of getting, as he expressed it, "some mark of papal benevolence that could do him honor both in this world and the next." The minister shook his head. He

[1] 2 Les Maitresses de Louis XV., 98.

said it was scarcely possible to mingle in that way things celestial and political. Like a true courtier of the period, the poet betook himself to a lady, Mademoiselle du Thil, a connection of Madame du Châtelet, and extremely well disposed toward himself. She had a friend in the Pope's household, the Abbé de Tolignan, whom she easily engaged in the cause. D'Argenson, also, bore the scheme in mind when he wrote to the French envoy at Rome. Voltaire, meanwhile, read the works of his Holiness, of which there are still accessible fifteen volumes, and in various ways "coquetted" with him, causing him to know that the celebrated Voltaire was one of his readers. The good-natured Pope was prompt to respond. The Abbé de Tolignan having asked for some mark of papal favor for Voltaire, the Pope gave two of his large medals to be forwarded to the French poet, the medals bearing the Pope's own portrait. His Holiness also caused a polite letter to be written to him by his secretary, asking his acceptance of the medals. Then the French envoy, ignorant of these proceedings, also applied to the Pope on behalf of Voltaire, requesting for him one of his *large* medals. The Pope, ignorant of the envoy's ignorance, replied, "To St. Peter's itself I should not give any larger ones!" The envoy was mystified, and Voltaire, on receiving a report of the affair, begged the minister for foreign affairs to write to the envoy in explanation.

The two large medals reached the poet in due time. He thought Benedict XIV. the most plump-cheeked holy father the church had enjoyed for a long time, and one who "had the air of knowing very well *what all that was worth.*" He wrote two Latin verses as a legend for the Pope's portrait, to the effect that Lambertinus, officially styled Benedict XIV., was the ornament of Rome and the father of the world, who by his works instructed the earth, and adorned it by his virtues. Emboldened by success, he ventured upon an audacity still more exquisite, and one which would not be concealed in the archives of the foreign office. All Europe should know the favor in which this son of the church was held at the papal court. He resolved to dedicate to the Pope that tragedy of "Mahomet," which the late Cardinal de Fleury had admired and suppressed. He sent a copy of the drama to the Pope, with the following letter: —

[Paris, August 17, 1745.] "Very Holy Father, — Your Holiness will be pleased to pardon the liberty which one of the humblest, but one of the warmest, admirers of virtue takes in consecrating to the chief of the true religion a production against the founder of a religion false and barbarous. To whom could I more properly address a satire upon the cruelty and the errors of a false prophet than to the vicar and imitator of a God of peace and truth? Will your Holiness deign to permit that I place at your feet both the book and its author? I dare ask your protection for the one, and your benediction for the other. It is with these sentiments of profound veneration that I prostrate myself and kiss your sacred feet."

The Pope delayed not to accept the homage. He answered the letter in the tone of a scholar and man of the world: —

"Benedict XIV., Pope, to his dear son, salutation and Apostolic Benediction. Some weeks ago there was presented to me on your behalf your admirable tragedy of 'Mahomet,' which I have read with very great pleasure. Cardinal Passionei gave me afterwards, in your name, the beautiful poem of 'Fontenoy.' M. Leprotti has communicated to me your distich for my portrait;[1] and Cardinal Valenti yesterday sent me your letter of August 17th. Each of these marks of your goodness merited a particular expression of my gratitude; but permit me to unite these different attentions in order to render you my thanks for all of them at once. You ought not to doubt the singular esteem with which merit so acknowledged as yours inspires me. When your distich was published in Rome, we were told that a man of letters, a Frenchman, being in a company when it was spoken of, discovered in the first verse a false quantity. He pretended that the word *hic*, which you employ as short, ought always to be long. We replied that he was in error; that that syllable was short or long in the poets indifferently, Virgil having made the word short in this verse, —

'Solus hic inflexit sensus, animumque labantem,'

and long in this, —

'Hic finis Priami fatorum, hic exitus illum.'

"This answer was, perhaps, pretty well for a man who has not read Virgil in fifty years. Although you are the interested party in this difference, we have so high an idea of your candor and integrity, that we do not hesitate to make you the judge between your critic and ourselves. Nothing remains but for us to grant you our Apostolic Benediction.

[1] The distich was as follows: —

"Lambertinus hic est, Romæ decus, et pater orbis,
Qui mundum scriptis docuit, virtutibus ornat."

"Given at Rome, on the day of Holy Mary the greater, September 19, 1745, the sixth year of our pontificate."

To this letter Voltaire replied with curious happiness. He contrived to flatter the Pope very agreeably, while surpassing him on his own ground: —

[Voltaire to Pope Benedict XIV.] "The lineaments of your Holiness are not better expressed in the medals with which you have had the particular goodness to gratify me, than are those of your mind and character in the letter with which you have deigned to honor me. I place at your feet my very humble and heart-felt thanks. I am obliged to recognize the infallibility of your Holiness in your literary decisions, as in other things more important. Your Holiness has a better acquaintance with the Latin tongue than the French fault-finder whose mistake you deigned to correct. I admire the aptness of your citation from Virgil. Among the monarchs who have been amateurs in literature, the sovereign pontiffs have always distinguished themselves; but none have adorned like your Holiness the most profound erudition with the richest ornaments of polite literature.

'Agnosco[1] rerum dominos, gentemque togatam.'

"If the Frenchman who censured with so little justice the syllable *hic* had had his Virgil as present to his memory as your Holiness, he would have been able to cite, very apropos, a verse in which this word is both short and long. That beautiful verse seemed to me to contain the presage of the favors with which your generous goodness has overwhelmed me. It is this: —

'Hic vir, hic est, tibi quem promitti sæpius audis.'[2]

"Rome ought to resound with this verse, to the exaltation of Benedict XIV. It is with sentiments of the most profound veneration and of the most lively gratitude that I kiss your sacred feet."[3]

Soon an edition of the tragedy of "Mahomet" appeared, preceded by this correspondence, in Italian and in French, and thus the world was informed, in the most interesting manner, that the author stood well with the head of the church.

He continued to labor for the amusement of the court. He wrote his opera of the "Temple of Glory," set to music by Rameau, for the grand *fête* to be given at Fontainebleau

[1] For Romanos. 1 Æneid, 281.

[2] This is the man, this is he [Augustus Cæsar] whom thou hast often heard promised to thee. 6 Æneid, 791.

[3] 5 Œuvres de Voltaire, 352.

in honor of the late successes of the French in the field. He also set about preparing a more durable memorial of the two campaigns in which the king had figured, — a history of the same, compiled from the lips of eye-witnesses. He flew at this patriotic task, as he says, "with passion," and continued it until his work became a considerable history of the reign of Louis XV.

An incident which occurred at the beginning of this task amused him very much, and added one more supper story to his ample stock. Having heard that the secretary of the Duke of Cumberland, during the recent operations, bore the name of his old English friend Falkener, ambassador at Constantinople, he wrote to the secretary, asking for information relating to those operations. He wrote in English : —

"You bear a name that I love and respect. I have, these twenty years since, the honor to be friend to Sir Everard Falkener. I hope it is a recommendation towards you. A better one is my love for truth. I am bound to speak it. My duty is to write the history of the late campaigns, and my king and my country will approve me the more, the greater justice I'll render to the english nation. Though our nations are ennemies at present, yet they ought for ever to entertain a mutual esteem for one another : my intention is to relate what the duke of Cumberland has done worthy of himself and his name, and to enregister the most particular and noble actions of your chiefs and officers, which deserve to be recorded, and what passed most worthy of praise at Dettingen and Fontenoy, particularities, if there is any, about general sir James Campbel's death, in short, all that deserves to be transmitted to posterity. I dare or presume to apply to you, sir, on that purpose; if you are so kind as to send me some memoirs, I'll make use of them. If not, I'll content myself with relating what has been acted noble and glorious on our side; and I will mourn to leave in silence many great actions done by your nation, which it would have been glorious to relate."

We can imagine his delight on receiving in reply a cordial letter from Sir Everard himself. It was Sir Everard Falkener who was serving under the Duke of Cumberland.

"How could I guess, my dear and honorable friend [wrote Voltaire] that your Mussulman person had shifted Galata for Flanders? and had passed from the seraglio to the closet of the duke of Cumberland? But now I conceive it is more pleasant to live with such a prince, than to speak in state to a grand-visir by the help of an

interpreter. Had I thought it was my dear sir Everard who was secretary to the great prince, I had certainly taken a journey to Flanders. My duty is to visit the place where your nation gave such noble proofs of her steady courage. An historian ought to look on and view the theatre in order to dispose the scenery of his work."

Sir Everard supplied him with abundant documents, and continued to serve him in various ways, as well in the field as at home. One short English letter of the next campaign from Voltaire to Falkener may find place here:—

[Paris, June 13, 1746.] "My dearest and most respected Friend, — Although I am a popish dog, much addicted to his Holiness, and like to be saved by his power, yet I retain for my life something of the english in me; and I cannot but pay you my compliment upon the brave conduct of your illustrious duke. You have made a rude, rough campaign in a climate pretty different from that of Turky. You have got amongst your prisoners of war a French nobleman called the marquis d'Eguilles, brother to that noble and ingenious madman who has wrote the *Lettres juives*. The marquis is possessed of as much wit as his brother, but is a little wiser. I think nobody deserves more your obliging attention, I dare say kindness. I recommend him to you from my heart. My dear Falkener is renowned in France for many virtues and dear to me for many benefits; let him do me this new favour, I will be attached to him for all my life. Farewell, my dear friend; let all men be friends, let peace reign over all Europe!"

Voltaire suggested to the minister for foreign affairs that he be sent on a secret mission to the quarters of the Duke of Cumberland, in the interest of peace, concealing his object under a pretext of visiting his old friend, the duke's secretary. The scheme, however, was not carried out.

Early in December, 1745, the victories of the French army were duly celebrated at Fontainebleau, when the Duke de Richelieu again called into being a hall like that which had served for the marriage festival, and again Voltaire shone as author of the divertisement performed in it. He presented to the splendid auditory gathered on the occasion three kinds of royal glory. In the first act, Belus figures, a conqueror pure and simple, barbarous and bloody, — a mere despoiler and desolater. Him the Muses disdain and the gods drive from the Temple of Glory. Next appears Bacchus-Alexander, conqueror of India, himself conquered by his appetites, roaming the earth with his bacchanalian crew. To him also a place is

denied in the Temple of Glory. Last comes benign, majestic Trajan, aiming only at the glory of Rome and the welfare of the world; valiant in war, but loving peace; deaf to calumny, but ever solicitous to seek out and reward modest worth, — such a king, in short, as intoxicated France longed to be able to think that Louis XV. was. To him, of course, the Temple of Glory flung open wide its gates, and Louis-Trajan entered, amid the rapturous effusion of the spectators. But he entered not alone. Plotine, a new and tender conquest, appears at his side, and goes with him into the Temple, while the chorus sings, —

"Toi que la Victoire
Couronne en ce jour,
Ta plus belle gloire
Vient du tendre amour." [1]

Who could fail to recognize Louis and Pompadour in Trajan and Plotine? No true courtier. This opera, aided by music, dance, song, and spectacle, all in great perfection, was highly successful. At the close of the performance, the author, much elated, went to the door of the royal box, and said to the Duke de Richelieu, who was near the king, and said it loud enough for the king to hear, "Is Trajan content?" The king had the grace to be disconcerted by this enormous compliment, and made no remark upon it. He ordered the divertisement to be repeated on a subsequent evening; and it served on similar occasions during the long favor of Richelieu.[2]

During this *fête*, Madame du Châtelet was conspicuous among the grand ladies of the court, and enjoyed once more her hereditary right of sitting in the queen's presence on a stool without a back, and of losing her money at the queen's play.

It is more agreeable to observe that Voltaire used this gleam of court favor for the benefit of others, as well as himself. To this period belongs the pleasing story of his inviting Marmontel to Paris, and starting him upon the perilous career of literature. With us a poor and ambitious student works his way through college by teaching, by mechanical labor, by harvesting, by serving as waiter at summer hotels; in France, he

[1] Thou whom Victory crowns to-day, thy most beautiful glory comes of tender ove.

[2] Voltaire à la Cour, par Desnoiresterres, page 32.

often competes for the liberal prizes offered every year by the "Academies" of the larger towns for the best poems and essays. Marmontel, destined to a long and illustrious literary life, was at twenty an extremely poor student at a college of Toulouse. For the prize of poetry, while as yet he knew not one rule or usage of prosody, he selected as his subject the Invention of Gunpowder, and launched boldly into the sublime,

"Kneaded by some infernal Fury's bloody hands."

The ambitious competitor has related, in his own interesting manner, the results of this venture, —

"I could not [he says in his Memoirs] recover from my astonishment at having written so fine an ode. I recited it with all the intoxication of enthusiasm and self-love; and when I sent it to the Academy I had no doubt of its bearing away the prize. It did not succeed; it did not even obtain for me the consolation of honorable mention. I was enraged, and, in my indignation, I wrote to Voltaire, sent him my poem, and cried to him for vengeance. Every one knows with what kindness he received all young men who announced any talent for poetry; the French Parnassus was an empire whose sceptre he would have yielded to no one on earth, but whose subjects he delighted to see multiply. He sent me one of those answers that he could turn with so much grace, and of which he was so liberal. The praises he bestowed on my poem amply consoled me for what I called the injustice of the Academy, whose judgment, as I said, did not weigh one single grain in the balance against such a suffrage as his. But what flattered me still more than his letter was the present he sent me of a copy of his works, corrected by his own hand. I was mad with pride and joy, and ran about the town and the colleges with his present in my hands. Thus began my correspondence with that illustrious man, and that intimate friendship which lasted, without any change, for five and thirty years, dissolved only by his death.

"I sent my mother the handsome present he made me of his works. She read them, and (on her death-bed) was reading them again. 'If you see him,' said she, 'thank him for the sweet moments he has made your mother pass; tell him that she knew by heart the second act of "Zaïre," that she wept over "Mérope," and that the verses in the "Henriade" upon Hope have never left her memory or her heart.'"

The young man, compelled at length to decide between the church, the law, and literature, consulted the chief of litera-

ture, who advised him to remove at once to Paris and try the career of letters. Marmontel replied that his poverty forbade so doubtful and costly an experiment. During the December *fête* at Fontainebleau, Voltaire was so happy as to get from the Count d'Orry, comptroller-general of the finances, the promise of a place in the public service for the young poet. Let Marmontel relate what followed : —

"Toward the end of this year [1745], a little note from Voltaire came, and determined me to set off for Paris. 'Come,' said he, 'and come without inquietude. M. Orry, whom I have spoken to, undertakes to provide for you.' Who was M. Orry? I knew not. I went to ask my good friends at Toulouse, and showed them my note. 'M. Orry!' exclaimed they. 'Why, it is the comptroller-general of finance! My dear friend, your fortune is made : you will be a farmer-general. Remember us in your glory. Protected by the minister, it will be easy for you to gain his esteem and confidence. You will be at the source of favor. Dear Marmontel, make some of its rivulets flow down to us. A little streamlet of Pactolus will content our ambition.' One would be receiver-general ; another would be satisfied with an humbler place in the finances, or with some other employment of two or three hundred a year ; and this depended on me!"

With six louis d'or in his pocket, and a translation into French of Pope's "Rape of the Lock," he set out for Paris, a journey of three hundred miles, and reached at length, with palpitating heart and "a kind of religious fear," the abode of Voltaire.

"Persuaded [he continues] that I should have to speak first, I had turned in twenty ways the phrase with which I should address him, and was satisfied with none. He relieved me from this difficulty. On hearing my name, he came to me, and extending his arms, 'My good friend,' said he, 'I am very glad to see you. Yet I have bad news to tell you. M. Orry had undertaken to provide for you ; M. Orry is no longer in favor.'

"I could scarcely have received a more severe, more sudden, or more unexpected blow ; but I was not stunned by it. I have always been astonished at the courage I have felt on great occasions, for my heart is naturally feeble. 'Well, sir,' said I, 'then I must contend with adversity ; I have long known and long struggled with it.' 'I am glad,' said he, 'to find you have confidence in your own powers. Yes, my good friend, the true and most worthy resource of a man of letters is in himself and in his genius. But, till yours shall have pro-

cured you something upon which to subsist, — I speak to you candidly, as a friend, — I must provide for you. I have not invited you hither to abandon you. If, even at this moment, you are in want of money, tell me so: I will not suffer you to have any other creditor than Voltaire.' I returned him thanks for his kindness, assuring him that, for some time at least, I should not need to profit by it, and that, when I should, I would confidently have recourse to him. 'You promise me,' said he, 'and I depend on you. In the mean time, let 's hear what you think of applying to.' 'I really don't know; you must decide for me.' 'The stage, my friend, the stage is the most enchanting of all careers; it is there that in one day you may obtain glory and fortune. One successful piece renders a man at the same time rich and celebrated; and if you take pains you will succeed.' 'I do not want ardor,' replied I; 'but what should I do for the stage?' 'Write a good comedy,' said he, in a firm tone. 'Alas, sir, how should I draw portraits? I do not know faces.' He smiled at this answer. 'Well, then, write a tragedy.' I answered that I was not quite so ignorant of the passions and the heart, and that I would willingly make the attempt. Thus passed my first interview with this illustrious man."

Marmontel began at once to study the art of play-writing, and an old actor soon set him upon the true path by telling him that the art of writing plays that act well can be learned only at the theatre. "He is right," said Voltaire; "the theatre is the school for us all. It must be open to you, and I ought to have thought of it sooner." He procured free admission for the young poet, and, erelong, Marmontel produced his "Dionysius" with a success that fixed his destiny. Voltaire himself witnessed his second tragedy, "Aristomène."

"He had expressed [says Marmontel] an inclination to see my piece before it was completed, and I had read to him four acts, with which he was pleased. But the act I had still to write gave him some inquietude, and not without reason. In the four acts that he had heard, the action appeared complete and uninterrupted. 'What!' said he, after the reading, 'do you pretend, in your second tragedy, to supersede a general rule? When I wrote "The Death of Cæsar," in three acts, it was for a boys' school, and my excuse was the constraint I was under to introduce only men. But you, on the great theatre, and on a subject where nothing could confine you, give a mutilated piece in four acts; for which unsightly form you have no example! This, at your age, is an unfortunate license that I cannot excuse.' 'And, indeed,' said I, 'this is a license I have no intention of taking. In my own imagination, my tragedy is in five acts, which I hope to complete.'

'And how?' inquired he. 'I have just heard the last act; all is perfectly coherent; and you surely do not think of beginning the action earlier?' 'No,' answered I, 'the action will begin and finish as you have seen; the rest is my secret. What I meditate is, perhaps, folly. But, however perilous the step may be, I must take it; and if you damp my courage all my labor will be lost.' 'Cheerily, then, my good friend, go on; risk, venture; it is always a good sign. In our profession, as in war, there are fortunate temerities; and the greatest beauties frequently burst forth under the most desperate difficulties.'

"At the first representation he insisted on placing himself behind me in my box; and I owe him this testimony, that he was almost as agitated and tremulous as myself. 'Now,' said he, 'before the curtain is drawn up, tell me from what incident you have drawn the act that was wanting.' I made him recollect that at the end of the second act it was said that the wife and son of Aristomène were going to be tried, and that at the commencement of the third it appeared that they had been condemned. 'Well,' said I, 'this trial that was then supposed to take place between the acts I have introduced on the stage.' 'What! a criminal court on the stage?' exclaimed he. 'You make me tremble.' 'Yes,' said I, 'it is a dangerous sand, but it was inevitable; it is Clairon that must save me.'

"'Aristomène,' had no less success than 'Dionysius.' Voltaire at every burst of applause pressed me in his arms. But what astonished him, and made him leap for joy, was the effect of the third act. When he beheld Léonide, loaded with irons, like a criminal, appear before her judges, command them by her dignity and magnanimity, get full possession of the stage and of the souls of the spectators, turn her defense into accusation, and, distinguishing among the senators the virtuous friends of Aristomène from his faithless enemies, attack, overwhelm, and convict them of perfidy, amid the applauses she received, 'Brava, Clairon!' cried Voltaire, '*Macte animo, generose puer!*'"

The coming of Marmontel to Paris added one more to the ever-increasing number of young writers whom Voltaire had assisted to form. The new men of talent were his own, and they were preparing to aid him in future contests with hostile powers. The Marquis de Vauvenargues, the young soldier who was compelled by ill health to abandon the career of arms, in which he was already distinguished, and now aspired to serve his country in the intellectual life, had been for some time one of Voltaire's most beloved friends. His first, his only work, "Introduction to the Knowledge of the Human Mind," was just appearing from the press, heralded by Voltaire's zeal

ous commendation. "My dear Master," the young disciple loved to begin his letters; and Voltaire, in writing to him, used all those endearing expressions which often make a French letter one long and fond caress. He sank into the grave in 1747, but his name and his work survive. It is evident from his correspondence that he was of a lofty and generous nature, capable of the true public spirit, — the religion of the new period.

Marmontel reached Paris in time to witness a day of triumph for Voltaire, which had been long deferred. There was a vacancy at the French Academy early in 1746. Mirepoix's voice was not heard on this occasion, and Voltaire, without serious trouble, succeeded in obtaining a unanimous election to the chair. This event could not have been at that time any increase of honor to an author of his rank. He valued an academic chair for himself and for his colleagues, such as Marmontel, D'Alembert, and others, as an additional protection against the Mirepoix. Members of the Academy had certain privileges in common with the officers of the king's household. They could not be compelled to defend a suit out of Paris; they were accountable to the king directly, and could not be molested except by the king's command. Above all, they stood in the sunshine of the king's effulgent majesty; they shared in the mystic spell of *rank*, which no American citizen can ever quite understand, and of which even Europeans of to-day begin to lose the sense. He was a little safer now against all the abuses of the royal power, usually covered by *lettres de cachet*.

May 9, 1746, was the day of his public reception at the Academy, when, according to usage, it devolved upon him to deliver a set eulogium upon his departed predecessor. The new member signalized the occasion by making his address much more than that. His eulogy was brief, but sufficient, and, when he had performed that pious duty, he struck into an agreeable and very ingenious discourse upon the charms, the limits, the defects, and the wide-spread triumphs of the French language. With that matchless art of his, he contrived in kingly style to compliment all his "great friends and allies," while adhering to his subject with perfect fidelity. Was it not one of the glories of the French language that a Frederic should adopt it as the language of his court and of his friendships, and

that Italian cardinals and pontiffs should speak it like natives? His dear Princess Ulrique, too, — then Queen of Sweden, — was not French her *native* tongue? There were some wise remarks in this address; as, for example, where he says that eminent talents become of necessity rarer as the whole nation advances: "In a well-grown forest, no single tree lifts its head very high above the rest." He concluded with the "necessary burst of eloquence" respecting the late warlike exploits of the king; in which, however, he gave such prominence to the services in the field of the Duke de Richelieu, a member of the Academy, that the First Gentleman almost eclipsed the monarch.

He was now at the highest point of his court favor. An epigram of his, written at this period, conveys to us his sense of the situation, and renders other comment superfluous: —

"Mon 'Henri Quatre' et ma 'Zaïre'
Et mon Americaine 'Alzire'
Ne m'ont valu jamais un seul regard du roi;
J'eus beaucoup d'ennemis avec très-peu de gloire;
Les honneurs et les biens pleuvent enfin sur moi
Pour une farce de la foire."[1]

[1] My "Henry IV." and my "Zaïre" and my American "Alzire" were never worth to me one look of the king. I had many enemies and very little glory. At length honors and benefits rain upon me for a farce of the fair.

CHAPTER XLIII.

OUT OF FAVOR AT COURT.

His court favor was no protection to him against his ill-wishers, either within or without the palace. Least of all could it protect him against himself.

His young friend, Vauvenargues, told him truly, just after his election to the French Academy, that his enemies had never been "so unchained against him" as then, and notified him that no effort would be spared to damn his new tragedy, "Semiramis," which he had written for the approaching *fête* of the Dauphiness, and at her request. The generous Vauvenargues was so shocked at the mania that seemed to prevail among some men of letters to degrade their chief that he said he was disgusted, not only with them, but with literature itself. "I conjure you, my dear master," he wrote, "to finish your tragedy so thoroughly that there will remain no pretext for an attack upon it, even to envy's self." The lamentable death of the princess in the second year of her married life delayed the production of "Semiramis," but did not stay the torrent of abuse that assailed the author.

Everything he did was burlesqued or lampooned, — his "Princesse de Navarre," his "Temple de Gloire," his speech at the Academy. The poet Roy, an old man now, and sharper tempered than ever, had been doubly disappointed by Voltaire's success at court. He had composed a divertisement for the wedding *fête*, which had been rejected; and he had been for many years a candidate for an academic chair, with no chance of success. One member, perhaps, remembered his ancient epigram upon the election of the Duke de Clermont, to the effect that 39+0 does not equal 40. The acidulated poet revived this year a scurrilous poem of his, written in 1736, entitled "The Poetic Triumph," in which the various mishaps of Voltaire's life, real and imaginary, were

related in the manner of a burlesque Odyssey. Of course the "bastonades" figured conspicuously in this work, as well as the controversy with Desfontaines; and, in the new edition of 1746, all the recent adventures and misfortunes of Voltaire which admitted of burlesque treatment were introduced. Roy had a particular skill in defamation, as men of small talent are apt to have, and he produced on this occasion some effective couplets. Besides this burlesque, he composed a parody of Voltaire's "Fontenoy," and a burlesque of his academic discourse, and, in general, "unchained himself" against the historiographer of France.

It is a pity Voltaire could not have been philosopher enough to laugh at all this, and straightway forget it, and so say we all, until some small, malign Roy selects *us* for a target. Then we feel as Voltaire felt, and many of us would do as he did, if we could. Among other things, he casually let loose in Paris drawing-rooms an epigram of the following purport: —

"Know you a certain rhymer, obscure, dry and pompous, often cold, always hard, having the rage and not the art to slander, who cannot please, still less can injure; for his misdeeds in a jail once caged, and after at St. Lazarus confined; banished, beaten, detested for his crimes, disgraced, laughed at, spit upon for his rhymes, — contented cuckold, speaking always of himself? Every one cries, *Ah! it is the poet Roy!*"

Such verses do not appease anger. The booksellers' shops of Paris were not the less littered with burlesques of the author, in verse and prose, sportive and rancorous. From the catalogue which French compilers give of these, we might conclude that they were the chief literary product of the summer of 1746. Voltaire, enraged, unable to reach the well-known, anonymous authors, rose against the sellers of this defamatory trash. Armed with ministerial authority, and conscious of a king's mistress behind him, he caused the shops to be searched by the police, the offensive publications to be seized, and at least five persons to be arrested. Two incidents of these proceedings were exceedingly unfortunate. In one of the houses searched, an elderly man, a zealous collector of the burlesques, was lying sick of a mortal disease, of

which he died soon after. In another instance the wrong man was accidentally cast into prison. One Travenol, a violinist at the opera, had distinguished himself above all others by his industry in spreading abroad everything he could find adverse to Voltaire; induced thereto by some offense the poet had given his mistress in the distribution of the *rôles* of the opera of "Samson." Travenol being in the country on leave, the police committed the terrible error of arresting his father, an old dancing-master, aged eighty years, who knew nothing of the matter. On learning the mistake, Voltaire procured from the ministry an order for his release; but, unhappily, the respectable old man had been six days in prison, of which three had been passed in solitary confinement, before he was restored to his home. His aged wife, too, and the wife of his absent son were alarmed and distressed beyond measure.

The true culprit was found at length, and against him the exasperated author brought a suit for damages. For a moment, through the good offices of the Abbé d'Olivet, he was disposed to forgive; but, mistaking some proceeding of Travenol, he conceived the idea that he was played upon, and therefore resumed the prosecution with redoubled zeal. For sixteen months this affair was in the courts; the Travenols bringing a counter suit for false imprisonment. After the usual delays, the cause was first tried in December, 1746, when a decision was pronounced which satisfied no one. For the imprisonment of the elder Travenol, Voltaire was condemned to pay five hundred francs damages, with costs, and ordered, in the manner of the ancient courts, not to do so again. Travenol, the younger, was required to pay three hundred francs, with costs and interest, for having "occasioned and circulated defamatory libels" against Voltaire, and he was expressly forbidden to repeat those offenses. Two of the pieces circulated by Travenol, namely, Roy's "Poetic Triumph" and a burlesque by the same author of Voltaire's speech at the Academy, were ordered to be brought to the bar of the court, and there publicly "suppressed and lacerated" by the clerk of the court.

Voltaire appealed to a higher tribunal. Another year passed. After a new trial, which occupied five sessions, the decree of the lower court was confirmed. Again all parties issued from

the contest disappointed. The plaintiff had demanded a particular retraction, and the infliction of a penalty which would deter his libelers from repeating their offenses. He deemed the penalty imposed a mere mockery of justice. "Ought not the scoundrels to be hanged," he wrote to Richelieu, "who infect the public with these poisons? But the poet Roy will have some pension, if he does not die of leprosy, by which his soul is more attacked than his body." Both the court and the public, we are assured, disapproved this prosecution, and censured all the parties to it. The collusion between the old satirist and the young violinist, for the purpose of wreaking their spite upon Voltaire, was sufficiently shown in the course of these trials. Nevertheless, the prosecution of a poor musician for selling burlesques, which gave but slight pain to any one but the object of them, did not present the plaintiff to the public in a pleasing light. Then, as now, a rich and powerful man seeking justice, in a court of justice, against a poor and insignificant man, had small chance of success. The sympathies of the court and the public go with the poor man. Ere long, the poet Roy *was* pensioned; Travenol continued to play the violin at the opera; and the libels were not extinguished.

The favor of the reigning mistress could not avail in protecting the historiographer against the consequences of his own imprudence. The rage among ladies of the highest rank in Europe to possess cantos of "La Pucelle" was such that the author of the poem did not always resist their importunities. The Duchess of Wurtemberg had a portion of it. Frederick II. of Prussia had with him two cantos, and Voltaire could not but remember that once the king's campaign carriage had been captured by Austrian hussars, and manuscripts of his own carried off, no one knew where. That monarch had a peculiar fondness for the "Pucelle." He disapproved the poet's new vocation of historiographer to such warriors as Louis XV. and Richelieu, which delayed the completion of that precious work. "Believe me," wrote the king, in December, 1746; "finish 'La Pucelle.' Better worth while is it to smooth the wrinkles from the foreheads of worthy people than to compose gazettes for blackguards [*polissons*]." He reproached the poet for not trusting him with more of a poem which he had confided to a

lady. "You have lent your 'Pucelle' to the Duchess of Wurtemberg. Know that she has had it copied during the night. Such are the people whom you trust; while the only persons who deserve your confidence, or, rather, to whom you ought to abandon yourself entirely, are the only ones whom you distrust." Voltaire swore that the duchess possessed no more of the poem than the king. "She has perhaps copied a page or two of the part which you have; but it is impossible that she has that which you have not." Besides, he might have added, duchesses do not take the field in a traveling carriage full of contraband writings. The king's mistress could not at that day protect the known author of "La Pucelle," even though she might read it nightly to the king in her boudoir.

Meanwhile, he seemed to be drawing nearer to the court. In December, 1746, according to Duvernet, he made his first appearance at the table assigned in all the palaces of the king to the Gentlemen of the Chamber. The tradition is that some of these high-born functionaries eyed the *bourgeois* gentleman askance, until he had uttered one of those pleasantries which no true son of Gaul can resist. They were speaking of the rumored marriage of a young lord with the daughter of a farmer-general, and the question arose as to where the ceremony should be performed. "At the tax-office," suggested one. "There is no chapel there," said others. Voltaire, hitherto silent, joined in the conversation. "Pardon me, gentlemen," said he, "there is the chapel of the Impenitent Thief." Farmer-general, under the old *régime*, was synonymous in the public estimation with plunderer. The company laughed, and relented toward their new associate.[1] It is not improbable that the *bourgeois* gentleman-in-ordinary was an unwelcome addition to a corps that valued itself upon its unquestionable nobility. M. Desnoiresterres publishes a curiously illiterate letter of the time from a young gentleman to his uncle in La Vendée, in which he reflects upon the king for appointing to so exalted a post "a certain Arouet of Saint-Lou, son of one Domar, who has made himself known under the name of Voltaire." The king, he adds, will not put upon the nobility "the affront" of dispensing this person (*ce cuidam*) from his

[1] Duvernet, chapter xii.

proofs (of nobility); but in order to procure those proofs, he will be obliged to seek them among the relations of his mother, which will be "a dishonor to gentlemen of name and arms, noble from time immemorial." Duvernet's anecdote, therefore, may have had a basis of truth; and it may have been for this reason that the king permitted him, soon after, to sell the keenly-coveted post, and retain its title, rights, exemptions, and privileges. He sold it for thirty thousand francs, and never again bestowed his society upon his colleagues.

Other enemies he had at court, more powerful and more respectable than a second-table of court dandies. In the royal palaces of France and of other countries in that century, there were two courts, the dull-virtuous and the brilliant-wicked; one presided over by the neglected queen, the other by the reigning mistress. The Queen of France, with her children and court, all under the influence of the austere and orthodox Mirepoix, could protest against the life led in the other wing of the palace only by the practice of piety carried to a forbidding excess. They sought and found alleviation in strict compliance with the religious routine prescribed by the church. They lived with some frugality and decency. If their conception of duty and self-control was narrow, erroneous, obsolete, they at least kept alive in France the sense that there were such things as duty and self-control. They felt, also, in some degree, that duty and self-control, though binding on all, are *most* binding upon the powerful and conspicuous classes, who may disregard them for a time with apparent impunity. Nor did they neglect the elegant life. The princesses attempted every art and played upon every instrument, even the trombone, and the queen sustained her wearisome part with sufficient dignity. It was necessary, no doubt, that their mode of virtue, so cramping to the intelligence, so debilitating to the conscience, should pass away, and be supplanted by a mode that will at length give the intellect and taste free play. But, take them just as they were, the life led at the queen's end of Versailles was less remote from virtue than that lived in Pompadour's splendid rooms.

The queen's circle was not so destitute of influence as it seemed. The king was not devoid of natural affection, and he was liable to fits of religious fear. His family, it appears,

had influence enough to keep Voltaire from gaining a firm foothold at court.

This was the period when private theatricals were the reigning amusement of the idle classes in Europe. In 1748 there were, as we are told, sixteen noted companies of amateur actors in Paris among the nobility, without reckoning those of the *bourgeois*, one of which was about to give Lekain to the public stage. Madame de Pompadour conceived the project of amusing the king by a company of amateurs composed of the elect courtiers, herself being manager and chief actress. She possessed all the agreeable accomplishments: she could act, sing, play, and dance, to admiration. She could draw and paint pretty well, and even engrave with some skill. Her company, which chiefly consisted of princes, dukes, and duchesses, was capable of giving comedy, opera, and ballet. Admission to its lowest grade, even to the rank of silent supernumeraries, was regarded in the palace as the most exquisite distinction which a mortal could hope to attain in this sublunary scene. Madame de Pompadour's *femme de chambre* obtained a commission in the army for one of her relations by procuring for a duke the illustrious privilege of playing a policeman's part of a few lines in "Tartuffe."

Voltaire had formed madame's literary taste; he had known her from childhood; he was a member of her circle when the king first cast his eyes upon her bewitching beauty; she had made him the confidant of what she called her "love;" she used to give him some of that medicinal Tokay, recommended by the King of Prussia, which he declared was better than that which the king himself had sent to Cirey. Moreover, she was naturally and necessarily on the side of "the philosophers," who alone could imagine a scheme of morals that would not condemn her position in the home of the Queen of France. Cardinals, bishops, and priests courted her, flattered her, cringed to her, during all her long reign of nineteen years, and stood ready to give the king instant absolution, on the easy condition of her brief residence at one of her numerous châteaux. Nevertheless, she knew very well what the language was in which their profession compelled them to describe hers. In a word, she desired to oblige Voltaire, and she selected his comedy of "The Prodigal Son" as the play

to be first performed in the palace before the king. It had a striking success. At this theatre the etiquette was suspended which forbade applause in the king's presence, and the hall resounded with acclamations. The comedy was even played a second time, which gave the author the right to witness the performance, and admission to the royal theatre ever after. Naturally desirous of testifying his gratitude, he circulated a little poem which he had written for Madame de Pompadour while the king was at the seat of war, in 1745: —

"So then you reunite all the arts, all the tastes, all the talents of pleasing. Pompadour, you embellish Court, Parnassus, and Cythera. Charm of all hearts, treasure of a single mortal, may a lot so blest be eternal! May your precious days be marked by *fêtes;* may peace to our land return with Louis! Be both of you without enemies, and *may both of you keep your conquests.*"

In this poem he now made a slight alteration. Instead of wishing peace to return with Louis, he said, "May new successes mark the *fêtes* of Louis," which gave it the appearance of a more recent composition. There was a swift copying of these verses in the palace; and she was the fortunate lady who could first exhibit the true version. The queen and her daughters soon read them, and read them only to be the more incensed against the author. According to Pierre Laujon, a dramatist who contributed several pieces to Madame de Pompadour's theatre, and knew all the gossip of both ends of the palace, the entire coterie of the queen and Dauphin were boiling with indignation at the last line of this poem: "May both of you keep your conquests!" Those soured, dull, virtuous people thought this pretty jest "the climax of rashness and audacity." "The very idea," says Laujon, "of putting upon a level the glorious conquests of the king in Flanders and his conquest of the 'heart' of a mistress was an unpardonable crime." All the enemies of Voltaire were summoned to a conference in the apartment where the queen usually passed the evening, and there this new audacity of his was amply discussed.

The next day, the king's daughters, who always retained some hold upon his affections, visited him at their usual hour, and embraced him with more than their usual tenderness.

They repeated their caresses again and again, and when his heart was softened toward them they introduced the subject of the verses, and dwelt upon the insolence of a poet who could speak in that light tone of the king's immortal exploits. "Before Madame de Pompadour could be informed of it," says Laujon, "the exile of Voltaire was signed;" and the mistress, powerful as she was, dared not risk a struggle to get the decree annulled. She dissembled her mortification and was silent.

Voltaire dined that evening in Paris with a gay company of literary men, one of whom was his brother dramatist, Pierre Laujon, who reports the scene. Voltaire came late to the feast, no one but himself being aware of what had occurred at Versailles. "Quick!" said the host; "bring some dinner for M. de Voltaire." But the new-comer took nothing except seven or eight cups of coffee without milk and two little rolls. That, however, did not prevent him from "paying his score by a number of piquant sallies." "I remember," says the narrator, "that when the guests began to speak of the new tax upon playing cards, he very strongly approved it, and mentioned many other articles of luxury that invited taxation; thus indicating an ardent and fruitful mind, to which no subject of politics or administration was foreign. After leaving the table, he was surrounded by the guests, who plied him well with questions."[1]

This exile of which Laujon speaks was probably a momentary concession to the ladies, and did not involve the immediate departure of the poet from Paris. From about this time, however, in 1747, we perceive, from his letters and other indications, that his court favor was of little force; and in the course of that year an event occurred which caused him to leave the royal abode with precipitation. He was out of place at court. No palace is large enough to contain two monarchs. All deference and courtesy as he was to princes and their mistresses, he was not under the illusion which concealed from many eyes the precise stature of those personages. He knew too well, as he remarked of the jovial Pope Benedict, "what all that was worth."

[1] Œuvres Choisies de P. Laujon, page 90.

CHAPTER XLIV.

PRECIPITATE FLIGHT FROM COURT.

During his long life of literary labor, Voltaire usually had an amanuensis or secretary domesticated with him. Three of his secretaries recorded their recollections, from which we get close and interesting views of the man, both in his ordinary routine and at some crises of his existence. One of them, S. G. Longchamp, entered his service during this turbulent period of court and ministerial favor, and remained with him about seven years. Voltaire evidently had much confidence in him; he trusted him to collect, hold, and pay considerable sums of money, and even left him in charge of important affairs during his own absences from Paris. Some doubt has been cast upon the trustworthiness of Longchamp's extraordinary anecdotes from the incorrectness of some statements which he must have derived from others. The Travenol affair, for example, he misunderstood, and blends with it other matters having no connection with it. When he related what he personally saw and heard, he appears to have usually done his best to tell the truth; and, indeed, we may well ask what mortal could have invented those of his tales which task our credulity most. I shall therefore translate a few passages from his narrative, leaving to the reader the much more difficult task of reading them by the light of other days and climes.

I need only add that Longchamp owed his introduction into the house of Madame du Châtelet to the recommendation of his sister, who was madame's *femme de chambre*. He was first engaged as her steward, or *maître d'hôtel*, and took charge of her establishment in Paris.

LONGCHAMP ENTERS THE SERVICE OF VOLTAIRE.

"I remained five or six months sufficiently at my ease in the house of Madame du Châtelet, having scarcely anything to do except attend-

ing to purchases and commissions. She had but a single meal a day, which was supper, and she took that almost always away from home. In the morning her breakfast consisted of a roll and a cup of coffee with cream, so that her steward and cook had very little occupation. During that period I do not believe she gave more than ten or twelve suppers, and when that happened there were but few guests, with few dishes and still less wine. Her cellar was not well furnished; her wine-merchant sent her two dozen bottles at once, half being red, which he called burgundy, but which really was of Paris vintage; and the other half white, called champagne, and no more correctly styled than the other. When that supply was exhausted it was renewed. My principal business was to lay in the other provisions of the house, — wood, candles, food, etc. Madame did not board her servants, but gave them instead a compensation in money. It was I who was charged to pay them every fifteen days: her coachman, her two lackeys, and her female cook at the rate of twenty sous per day; her footman, her *femme de chambre*, and myself at thirty sous per day. I received also the dessert from the table, which I shared with my sister. It was not long before I wearied of the monotonous life which I led at Madame du Châtelet's, where, during a great part of the day, I was without employment. I sought some resource to dissipate my *ennui*, and I found one which suited me very well. M. de Voltaire lodged in the house, as well as his secretary, and with the latter I contracted a firm friendship. When the work of the house was done, and there remained nothing more for me to do, I mounted to this secretary's room. He gave me the works of M. de Voltaire to read, and even, seeing that I wrote pretty well, begged me sometimes to help him copy the manuscripts of that author, who often overcharged him with work. That amused me much, and when madame was from home, which happened often, I passed almost whole days in this occupation. M. de Voltaire found me there one day, and, knowing me to be attached to Madame du Châtelet and an inmate of the house, he made no objections. He examined my writing, and I perceived that he found it to his mind. From that time I did not fail, whenever there was nothing for me to do, to go to his secretary's room, where I was entertained and instructed, and took pains to improve my handwriting.

"Nevertheless, at the end of some months, I had to renounce this occupation, as well as the house of Madame du Châtelet. I left that lady, perhaps too lightly, piqued at an injustice she had done my sister, whom I obliged also to leave. Some weeks after, there was in her house a more considerable defection. It was the season of the royal residence at Fontainebleau, when all the court was there; ma-

dame, also, as usual, having *tabouret* with the queen, and being of her play. At the moment when she was making her preparations to go to Fontainebleau, all her servants left her, under pretext that living was dearer in that city than at Paris; complaining, too, of her economy and the smallness of their wages, and saying that they could easily find better pay elsewhere. There remained to her only a *femme de chambre*, whom she had taken but a few days before. She had had all M. de Voltaire's servants put upon the same footing as her own, because she governed him; and they left, also, according to an understanding among themselves. As a climax of misfortune, his secretary was taken from him by a violent inflammatory disease. This circumstance, doubtless, made him remember me in the midst of the inconvenient desertion, and, having informed himself of my abode, he sent for me to come and speak to him. He asked me if I was willing to go with him to Fontainebleau, and serve him as secretary during the time of his residence there. Being satisfied with the terms he offered, and charmed also to see the court, which I had not seen since my coming to Paris, I acquiesced willingly in his request. Thus it was that I entered the service of M. de Voltaire. I expected to remain in it only during the stay at Fontainebleau; but various circumstances, unforeseen, deranged my projects, and made me take the resolution to stay with him as long as he wished. I did not leave him until long after, during his residence at the court of the King of Prussia, as I shall relate by and by. I can but applaud myself for having entered his service. I was overwhelmed with his bounties and honored with his entire confidence, as I had previously been with that of Madame du Châtelet."

LONGCHAMP'S FIRST DAY'S WORK FOR VOLTAIRE.

"M. de Voltaire and Madame du Châtelet were lodged at Fontainebleau at the house of the Duke de Richelieu. All their servants had left them the evening before their departure, giving as pretext the insufficiency of their wages. Madame, in haste to set out, took at once and without inquiry the first servants who presented themselves. M. de Voltaire had none. I arrived the third day after them at Fontainebleau, at two o'clock in the morning. All was perfectly quiet in the mansion. After sleeping some hours, I went into the chamber of M. de Voltaire, who was just waking. He had been unable to find any servant. Delighted to see me, he begged me to light his fire, the cold being somewhat severe that day. That done, being still in bed, he told me, to bring him a portfolio, which I did not immediately perceive. As I delayed satisfying him, not knowing where he had put that portfolio, he threw off his bed-clothes, got half out of bed,

and, pointing with his finger to a chair in a dark corner of the room, he cried out with force and emphasis, 'There it is! Don't you see it?' A little confused by the tone of his exclamation, I seized the portfolio, and placed it in his hands. He took from it a copy-book which contained the beginning of his 'Essay upon the Manners and Arts of Nations,' and said to me that, after I had looked about for a lackey, I could employ the rest of the day in copying its contents upon some fine Dutch paper which he had brought for the purpose. He then asked me if I knew how to dress his wig. I answered, Yes. Then he got up, put on his shoes and stockings, and shaved. Meanwhile, I took his wig, dressed it as well as I could, and powdered it with white powder. When he came to put it on it was not dressed to his mind; he laughed at his new wig dresser, took the wig, shook out the powder with violence, and told me to give him a comb. Having given him the one I had in my hand, which was small, although it had two blades, he threw it upon the floor, saying it was a large comb that he wanted. Upon my telling him that I had no other for the moment, he told me to pick it up. I did so, and gave it to him again. He passed it several times through his wig, and, after having put it thoroughly out of order, he tossed it upon his head. I helped him on with his coat, and he went to breakfast with Madame du Châtelet.

"This *début* into the service of M. de Voltaire did not appear to me to promise well for the future, and I applauded my good sense in having engaged only for their stay at Fontainebleau. His abruptness displeased me, and I took it at first for brutality; but I soon perceived that it was in him only an extreme vivacity of character, which burst forth upon slight occasion, and was almost instantly calm again. I saw more and more, as time went on, that, while his vivacities were transient and, so to speak, superficial, his indulgence and goodness were qualities solid and durable.

"A moment after, I went out of the house in search of a servant for him. I went all over the city without being able to find one that would suit him. After having dined, I returned, and set myself to copying the manuscript he had left me."

SUDDEN DEPARTURE FROM FONTAINEBLEAU.

"Neither madame nor he came home during the day. I sat up for them until half past one in the morning, not doubting that they were at the queen's play, which was prolonged sometimes far into the night. At that hour I saw them returning together, both looking sad and troubled. On arriving, madame told me to find her servants, and tell her coachman to put the horses at once to the carriage, as she

wished to leave immediately. At that hour, in the middle of the night, it was difficult to get together her people, who were lodged in various parts of the city. There were only in the house her *femme de chambre* and myself. I went at once in search of the servants. The coachman, whom I awoke first, made haste to harness the horses to the carriage. When all was ready, they got into it with the *femme de chambre*, who had only time to pack two or three parcels, which she took with her. They left Fontainebleau before the break of day.

"This order of Madame du Châtelet surprised me much; I could not guess the true cause of so precipitate a departure. I only learned it at Paris, when I had returned to her house there. That night the play at the queen's table had been very stormy, and Madame du Châtelet had been particularly unfortunate. Before setting out for Fontainebleau, she had got together as much money as she could. The strong-box of her agent was but slenderly furnished, and she had been able to draw from it only four hundred and odd louis. M. de Voltaire, who did not play, had two hundred in his purse. The first day of their arrival, madame lost her four hundred louis. On returning to her lodging, she dispatched a lackey as a courier with letters to her agent and some friends, in order to get a supply. Meanwhile, M. de Voltaire gave the marquise the two hundred louis which he had brought with him. At the second session these took the same road as the others with great velocity, but not without some remonstrances on the part of the lender. The lackey returned the next day, bringing two hundred louis, which her agent, M. de la Croix, had borrowed at high interest, and a hundred and eighty more, which her friend, Mademoiselle du Thil, had joined to them. With this sum madame returned to the queen's play. Alas! her louis d'or only appeared upon the table to disappear. Piqued by such constant ill luck, and believing it must cease at last, she determined to make good her losses, and continued to play very high, going in debt for the sums lost. She lost eighty-four thousand francs with inconceivable intrepidity. The play over, M. de Voltaire, who was at her side, alarmed at so considerable a loss, said to her in English that her absorption in the game had prevented her from perceiving that she was playing with cheats. These words, though pronounced in a low tone, were overheard by some one, and repeated. Madame remarked it, and told M. de Voltaire, for whom that could have some disagreeable consequences. They withdrew quietly, and, having taken the resolution to return at once to Paris, they set out from Fontainebleau the same night.

"I remained behind alone to gather and pack their effects, and convey them to Valvin, where I was to take the water-coach [*le coche d'eau*] and bring the whole to Paris. Madame's carriage took the

high-road. On arriving near Essonne, a wheel of the carriage was broken, and luckily it was almost opposite the house of a wheelwright, who repaired the accident by substituting another wheel. The work finished, it was necessary to pay this wheelwright, but it so happened that neither the masters nor their servants had a single sou. The man, not knowing them, refused to let them go before he was paid. At that moment, by another happy accident, an acquaintance passed, coming from Paris in a post-chaise. Madame du Châtelet, having gone up to the chaise, saw in it with great joy an old friend of her house. She informed him of her embarrassment, which he ended at once by handing to madame the wherewithal to pay the debt and the expenses of the journey."

TWO MONTHS IN HIDING AT SCEAUX.

"When they were near Paris, M. de Voltaire alighted, and went to a village a little way from the high-road. There he wrote a letter to the Duchess du Maine, and had it carried by a peasant, who was to wait for an answer. In this letter, M. de Voltaire informed the princess of his adventure, and prayed her to give him at Sceaux, where she then was, an asylum in which he could be concealed from his enemies. Madame du Maine took his request in good part. A messenger was sent him with a note, informing him that, on his arrival, he would find at the gate of the château M. du Plessis, a confidential officer, who would conduct him to private rooms, which would be made ready to receive him in the manner he desired. He waited until after dark before going to Sceaux, and there he found M. du Plessis, who conducted him, by a secret staircase, to a remote suite of rooms, which was precisely what he wanted. It was from the depths of this retreat that he went down every night to the chamber of the Duchess du Maine, after she was in bed and her servants had retired. A single footman, who was in her confidence, then set a little table by her bedside, and brought M. de Voltaire's supper. The princess took great pleasure in seeing him and talking with him. He amused her by the gayety of his conversation, and she instructed him by telling him many old court anecdotes which he did not know. Sometimes, after the repast, he read to her a tale or a little romance which he had written during the day on purpose to divert her. Thus were composed 'Babouc,' 'Memnon,' 'Scarmentado,' 'Micromegas,' 'Zadig,' of which he wrote every day some chapters.

"On her part, Madame du Châtelet was shut up at home for nearly six weeks, occupied in making arrangements for the payment of her gambling debts. . . . . Two months passed before M. de Voltaire dared show himself or leave his rooms in the day-time. At last, Ma-

dame du Châtelet succeeded in appeasing the players who had complained of the words of M. de Voltaire. . . . . Madame du Châtelet hastened herself to carry this news to Sceaux, where Madame du Maine retained her. M. de Voltaire then went out of his mysterious asylum, and appeared at the court of the princess, where a number of amiable and accomplished persons were always to be found. From that moment the company were occupied in arranging festivals and divertisements of all kinds for Madame la Duchesse in which every one took part."

LONGCHAMP JOINS HIS MASTER AT SCEAUX.

"After the departure, so precipitate, of Madame du Châtelet and M. de Voltaire, I hastened to execute their orders. The packages were immediately made. I hired a wagon to transport them to Valvin, where I had them placed upon the water-coach, which did not arrive at Paris until pretty late in the evening. Upon reaching the mansion, I found Madame du Châtelet, and was surprised not to see M. de Voltaire. Madame told me that he was not in Paris, which redoubled my surprise. She then explained to me the late proceedings, and the resolution which M. de Voltaire had taken not to show himself for some time, and mentioned the retreat which he had chosen. The next day I received a note from him, in which he told me to go to him at Sceaux, and to bring with me in a hackney-coach the little traveling bureau in which he usually kept his unfinished manuscripts, and which was then in his parlor. He warned me not to arrive before eleven o'clock in the evening, because at that hour I should find some one at the gate of the château who would guide me to his apartments, and who would cause to be carried in the little article of furniture of which he was in need. I executed his orders to the letter, and was conducted to a suite in the second story of the château, looking out upon the gardens and a court-yard. In order to conceal who inhabited those rooms, the shutters remained closed even in the day-time.

"Here I passed nearly two months with M. de Voltaire, without seeing the sun, unless by stealth, or when I escaped on the sly to do some errand in the village. During the first days of my confinement in this new kind of prison, where I had scarcely anything to do, I slept a great part of the day; for idleness was to me a punishment. It was necessary that we should not be seen. I kept close all day, and did not go down until eleven in the evening to sup with one of the footmen of the château, to whom I had been recommended. I usually prolonged this repast until one or two o'clock in the morning, as it was the only one I took in the twenty-four hours. M. de Voltaire did not descend to the room of Madame la Duchesse until every one else

had gone to bed, and did not return to his own until a little before daylight.

"This indefatigable man, to whom an idle life was still more insupportable than to me, laid in an ample supply of candles, by the aid of which he wrote all the time when he was not asleep; and he slept not more than five or six hours, at most. He made me copy the tales with which he was to regale Madame du Maine every evening. From time to time he gave me some commissions for Paris. In that case, I both went out and came back by night, and he remained alone during the day. To remedy this inconvenience, he told me one day to bring him from Paris a little Italian boy, whom he would employ to do his errands, so that I could remain always with him, and said that he would give him a place to sleep in a closet next to the room I occupied, where there was a camp-bed. I easily found such a boy as he wanted, a child of ten or eleven years, sufficiently intelligent, full of candor, and M. de Voltaire was well satisfied with him.

"Here is a proof of his ingenuous character. One day I brought some money from Paris for M. de Voltaire, — a purse containing two hundred louis d'or. Upon receiving it he put a part of the gold into a purse which he had in his pocket, closed the other again, and placed it in a little cupboard at the side of his chamber. In the same cupboard was a pair of new shoes, which M. de Voltaire had brought, but not yet worn, because they were too narrow. Some days after, when I was gone out upon an errand, he took a fancy to wear those shoes. He called Antoine, told him to take them from the cupboard and carry them to a shoemaker in the village to be stretched upon a last. The boy took the shoes, put them under his arm, and started. He crossed the park, which was covered with a foot of snow, slipped, plunged in, fell down, putting the pair of shoes now under one arm, now under the other. He reached the village at last, and entered the shop of a shoemaker, who, late as it was, was still at work. The man took his last and tried to get it into one of the shoes, which he thought at first was hobnailed, since it seemed so heavy. Unable to get in the last, he shook the shoe over a table, when there fell from it a purse full of louis d'or. Antoine, no less surprised than himself, had nevertheless the presence of mind to take the purse, and said, crying, that it was all a trick to prove his honesty. The man comforted him as best he could, and, the work being done, the little fellow paid him and returned. On seeing me, Antoine said, with the tears in his eyes, that he was an honest boy, incapable of doing wrong, and that it was unfair to test him in that manner, and a great piece of good luck for him that the money had not fallen out on the way. I consoled him, praised his honesty, and told him that it was only an effect

of the distraction of M. de Voltaire, who had thrown this money into the cupboard without looking, and had not thought of it again.

"I took the purse to M. de Voltaire, and related Antoine's adventure, which confirmed the good opinion he had of him. He put the purse upon his table, and told me we could both go to supper. For his part, he seldom went down to Madame du Maine until between one and two in the morning, and sometimes I returned before he did, each of us having a key to the rooms. This time I came back from supper later than usual. While I was at supper, M. de Voltaire, wishing to know if the money was right, spread it out upon that bureau of his which was covered with a green cloth; after which he went away, forgetting to lock it up, and leaving two lighted candles upon the table, two others upon the mantel-piece, and a door open. While going up-stairs I was astonished to see light in the corridor, and still more astonished to find all the doors open, the gold spread out, and M. de Voltaire absent. It frightened me, and a little after the idea occurred to me to count the sum, in order to ascertain if it was all there. Upon his return I remonstrated upon his imprudence, adding that, for my own satisfaction, I had counted the coins upon the table, and there were one hundred and sixty-five louis. 'That is my count,' said he. I asked him if he had actual need of the money. He said, 'No.' 'Very well, then,' said I, 'permit me to be the guardian of this sum, that at least I may be sure of its not having a third adventure before the day is over.' He laughed and consented.

"Meanwhile, we began to be tired of our retreat. M. de Voltaire took no exercise, slept little, employed all his time in writing, not by the feeble light of a lamp, but by that of wax candles, no less heating to the blood. His health was visibly impaired. For nearly two months we led this solitary life at Sceaux, when, one fine day, Madame du Châtelet arrived, and informed Madame du Maine that there was no longer any reason why M. de Voltaire should not show himself in public. Madame du Maine urged them to remain at Sceaux and join the brilliant company already assembled. The divertisements were varied every day: comedy, opera, balls, concerts. Among other comedies they played 'The Prude;' and before the representation M. de Voltaire came upon the stage and pronounced a new prologue appropriate to the occasion. Madame du Châtelet, who was as good a musician as actress, acquitted herself to perfection in the *rôle* of Issé. She played still better, if possible, the part of Fanchon, in the 'Originals,' — a comedy by M. de Voltaire, written and played previously at Cirey. This character seemed to be made expressly for her; her vivacity, her cheerfulness, her gayety, were displayed after Nature's own self. Ballets, also, were executed by the first dancers of the opera.

"Among so many varied pleasures must be mentioned the reading of several novelties, in verse and in prose, which were given in the drawing-room when the company assembled before dinner. Madame du Maine had made known to M. de Voltaire her desire that he should communicate to her little court those tales and romances which had so much amused her every evening. M. de Voltaire obeyed her. He knew as well how to read as to compose. Those little works were found delightful, and every one pressed him not to deprive the public of them. He objected that those trifles of society would not bear the light of publicity, and did not deserve to appear in it. He was obliged at length to promise that, on his return to Paris, he would think of having them printed.

"These amusements continued more than three weeks, which seemed to pass as quickly as a fairy dream. Madame du Châtelet then took leave of Madame du Maine, thanked her for all she had done for them, and returned to Paris."

VOLTAIRE CIRCUMVENTS A PUBLISHER.

"On reaching home, after three months' absence, M. de Voltaire, unwilling to fail in keeping the promise he had given at Sceaux, resolved to publish some of the little works which had been asked for there. He first made choice of the romance of 'Zadig,' one of the most striking, and his intention was not to let the public have it before Madame du Maine and her society had enjoyed the first reading, nor before he had sent copies to all his friends, — a thing not devoid of difficulty, even if he had it printed on his own account. His experience instructed him on this point. He wished, on the present occasion, not to be the dupe of publishers, and, to attain that end, this is what he contrived. He sent for M. Prault, who had previously published pretty editions of several of his works. . . . . He asked M. Prault how much he would charge for an edition of a thousand copies of the little romance of 'Zadig.' The price not suiting M. de Voltaire, he said the printing would be put off to another time. M. Prault, intending to print extra copies for his own advantage, returned the next day, and was not ashamed to reduce his price more than a third, pretending that he could economize a little both in the workmanship and in the paper. M. de Voltaire said that he wished his work printed in the best manner and upon fine paper, a sample of which he showed, at the same time designating the form and type. He said that he would himself revise the last proof, and he requested that the sheets should be sent to him as soon as they came from the press. M. Prault consenting, M. de Voltaire gave him one half of the romance of 'Zadig,' and told him that while that part was in the press he would

revise the other half with care, and perhaps add something to it. The bargain was carried out. M. de Voltaire, having received the first printed sheet, easily calculated that the last chapter of the part which M. Prault was printing would end with a certain page.

"The next day he sent for one Machuel, a Rouen printer, whom he knew to be in Paris, and proposed to him also to print the romance on the author's account. This printer took the job at a lower price than M. Prault. M. de Voltaire, alleging that he wished to make some changes in the first part of the work, gave him the second half, and told him the number of his first printed page. When all was finished, and the sheets of both halves had been brought in, he saw with pleasure that the two parts agreed perfectly in type and paper. The two publishers having no more copy, and calling to get the remainder of the work, he put them off for some days on various pretexts. Meanwhile, he charged me to seek out some women to fold and sew the sheets, and to buy some elegantly colored paper with which to cover the volumes. I at once found in the quarter Saint-Jacques all that he wanted, and brought back with me two women, who in less than three days folded, sewed, and covered all the copies. He ordered me to make forthwith a package of two hundred copies for Madame du Maine, and to put in envelopes an infinite number of others. He dictated to me the addresses, which I wrote upon the envelopes; being those of all his friends and even his acquaintances, as well those living in Paris as in the provinces. That done, all were sent off the same day by express, by mail, and by the coaches. The next day 'Zadig' was a subject of conversation in all Paris.

"The two booksellers, astounded, ran to the house of M. de Voltaire, where they poured forth complaints and reproaches, and asked payment of the sum agreed upon. He told them that, having heard a rumor of their printing more than the prescribed number of sheets, and fearing lest copies might be circulated among the public before his friends had seen the work, which would have frustrated his design, he had been able to think of no better means of preventing it than the little stratagem he had employed. He paid them for the work they had done, and even added something as a mark of his satisfaction with the excellent style in which the printing was executed. He added, by way of completing their consolation, that they could increase their profits by each printing his half and exchanging sheets with the other, so as to make complete copies; or, if they preferred it, each might set in type the other half, and publish an edition of his own. They put a good face upon the matter, begged him to continue his favor toward them, and, I believe, acted upon his advice; for new editions of 'Zadig' immediately appeared both in France and in foreign countries."

A WINTER JOURNEY FROM PARIS TO CIREY.

"On her return from Sceaux, Madame du Châtelet, either to forget her losses or merely to economize, took the resolution to go with M. de Voltaire and pass the rest of the winter at her estate of Cirey in Champagne. She preferred to travel by night. It was the month of January; the earth was covered with snow, and it was freezing very hard. Madame had caused to be made ready all the traps which usually accompanied her in her travels. Her old carriage was loaded like a coach, and it was drawn by post-horses. After Madame du Châtelet and M. de Voltaire were well wedged in side by side in the carriage, they placed the *femme de chambre* on the front seat, with the bandboxes and the various effects of her mistress. Two lackeys were posted behind, and we got upon the road towards nine o'clock in the evening.

"I rode on before as postilion, that they might find horses ready for them, and not have to wait for relays. They were to make one stop for rest at La Chapelle, a château three leagues beyond Nangis, belonging to M. de Chauvelin, where I was to arrive before them, to have a supper prepared and to light a fire in their rooms. I did not wait for them at the post-houses, but kept on in advance, according to their orders. It was an hour after midnight when I reached the post-house of Nangis. It was the festival of the place, and the postilions, not expecting any one at that hour and in such weather, had gone to divert themselves at a ball at the other end of the town. It was in vain, therefore, that I cracked my whip and shouted for the door to open. No one responded. I dismounted, and knocked with all my strength with the heel of my boot. At last, roused by this noise, a neighbor, putting his head out of the window, told me that there was no one at home, and that all the postilions were gone to the ball. I asked him if I could not hire some one to run thither and get the postilions at once. He offered to go himself, and in less than a quarter of an hour he returned with two postilions, which was the number required for the carriages. The time thus lost seemed to me sufficient to allow for the arrival of the carriage, and I was a little uneasy at the delay. I hesitated a moment whether to go on or return to find them; but reflecting that our travelers would be very much dissatisfied if, on arriving at La Chapelle, they should not find their orders exactly executed, I determined to continue my journey; and so much the more as there remained three long leagues to go, by a cross-road with which I was not acquainted.

"Unable to procure a guide, I had the road explained to me several times. I was told that, in going out of this town, I had only to follow

the high-road to the first left-hand turning. From that point the white horse they gave me, which knew that road perfectly, would serve me as a guide, and with the bridle upon his neck would take me straight to La Chapelle. I followed these directions, and after an hour and a half found myself opposite to the gate of a château, where the horse stopped of his own accord. The *concierge*, who expected no one, was gone to bed in the interior of the château, which was separated from the gate-way by a vast court-yard. In vain, therefore, I called and shouted; no one replied. Then, leading my horse by the bridle, I endeavored to go round the château, to see if I could make myself heard better at some other place. I came at last to a little door where there was a bell, which I rang several times. I saw with pleasure that I was heard; a gardener came and asked me who I was and what I wanted. I having answered him, he went to wake the *concierge*, who soon came and let me in. He immediately roused the servants, lighted a great fire in the kitchen and fires in the chambers. Some pigeons were brought and a chicken, which were immediately prepared and put down to roast. They added everything which they could find suitable to satisfy travelers, whose appetite ought to be well diposed. Nevertheless, despite all the time thus employed, they did not arrive. The day was about to dawn, and, my uneasiness increasing at every moment, I decided to return to Nangis, in order to discover what could have happened to them. I mounted, and set out from the château toward eight o'clock in the morning. I had gone some hundreds of paces when I perceived a carriage coming towards me very slowly, which I soon recognized to be that of Madame du Châtelet. When I had ridden up, they soon told me the cause of their delay; and the story was related afterwards to me in detail by the *femme de chambre*, and confirmed by M. de Voltaire himself.

"About half-way to the village of Nangis, the hinder spring of the carriage broke and let the carriage down upon the road, upon the side where M. Voltaire was seated. Madame and her *femme* fell upon him, with all their bundles and bandboxes, which were loosely piled on the front seat on each side of the woman, and which, following natural laws, were precipitated toward the corner where M. de Voltaire was compressed. Half stifled under such a load, he uttered piercing cries, but it was impossible to change his position. He had to remain as he was until the two lackeys, one of whom was hurt by his tumble, came up with the postilions to unload the carriage. First, they drew out all the bundles, then the women, then M. de Voltaire. They could get them out only by the door of the carriage which was uppermost; and hence, one of the lackeys and a postilion, having climbed upon the body of the carriage, drew them out as from a well, seizing them by

the first members which presented themselves, arms or legs, and passed them into the hands of their comrades below, who put them on the ground; for there was neither step nor stool by which they could be assisted to descend. It was then the question how to raise the carriage and see what had caused its overturn. These four men were not strong enough to do it, so overloaded was the roof with baggage, and it was necessary to dispatch a postilion on horseback for help in the next village, a mile and a half distant.

"While he was gone, M. de Voltaire and madame were seated side by side upon the cushions of the carriage, which had been drawn out and placed upon the road, that was covered with snow; and there, almost benumbed with cold notwithstanding their furs, they admired the beauty of the heavens. It is true, the sky was perfectly clear, the stars shone with the utmost brilliancy, the whole horizon was in view; no house, no tree, concealing from them the least part of it. It is known that astronomy was always one of the favorite studies of our two philosophers. Ravished by the magnificent spectacle displayed above and around them, they discoursed, shivering, upon the nature and the movements of the stars and upon the destination of so many immense globes scattered in space. They wanted nothing but telescopes to be perfectly happy. Their minds being thus lost in the depths of the skies, they were no longer conscious of their disagreeable position on the earth, or rather upon the snow, and in the midst of fragments of ice.

"Their learned contemplation and discourse were interrupted only by the return of the postilion, who brought with him four men, furnished with cord, tools, and a false spring. The carriage being set upright, the real cause of the accident was perceived, and they mended it as well as they could with the materials they had brought with them. Twelve francs were given them when their work was done; and they returned toward their village, little content with this sum, and grumbling at it.

"The carriage went on again, but had scarcely gone fifty paces when the cords, not being strong enough, became loose and partly broken, and the vehicle came down a second time, but without overturning, which rendered this new break-down much less disagreeable to our travelers.

"Some one ran quickly after the workmen who had just left. They, however, did not wish to return. They were brought back by force of promises that they should be better paid. With the assistance of the postilions, they raised the body of the coach with levers, and mended it more strongly, without deranging the interior of the vehicle. For greater safety, they proposed to these workmen to go with them as far as Nangis, which they did, and the carriage arrived there without other

accident. This time the men were liberally paid, and they went home well satisfied. The spring was solidly repaired by a blacksmith of that town, but the body of the vehicle was so badly damaged that the blacksmith advised them to go no faster than a walk, if they wished to prevent accidents; and it was so that they went nine miles before arriving at a good harbor.

"Having reached the château, they warmed themselves thoroughly before a large fire, which was not less necessary to them than nourishment. After having supped, or, to speak more correctly, breakfasted, for it was daylight, they withdrew to their rooms, where good beds had been prepared for them, and they slept very well till late in the afternoon. M. de Voltaire, having got up, ordered me to get workmen to repair the body of the carriage, which proved to be in such bad order that it took two whole days to put it in tolerable condition. On the third day we left La Chapelle, and arrived at length, without new delay or accident, at Cirey, the estate of Madame du Châtelet."

MADAME PROJECTS A PRIVATE EDITION OF "LA PUCELLE."

"Madame du Châtelet had long had a copy of 'La Pucelle,' written with her own hand. Her friends, both men and women, often importuned her to read portions of it to them. This trouble, from which she wished to be freed, suggested to her an odd idea, which was to print the poem secretly at her château of Cirey during her sojourn there in the following year, 1749. Her design was to have but a very small number of copies printed, to be distributed among those of her friends whom she knew to be discreet. Counting in advance upon the acquiescence of M. de Voltaire, she began, even in the winter, to prepare quietly for the execution of her project. In order to confine the secret to fewer persons, she resolved to take part in the work herself, with two faithful workmen, one of whom was to instruct her in making up the pages. This was an adroit and intelligent printer named Lambert, who for a number of years enjoyed the confidence of Madame du Châtelet and of M. de Voltaire. He performed well the commissions which they gave him, and he became their usual purveyor of forbidden books. Madame charged him to select a comrade for the following spring, and the conditions were arranged to their satisfaction.

"Lambert bought two fonts of new type, well assorted, from a type-founder of his acquaintance, who gave him pretty long credit and took notes in payment. He procured also some forms and a press, and the other necessary articles. The whole was packed and deposited with a commissioner of transportation, who, upon the first advice, was to send it to Bar-sur-Aube, whence the servants of Madame

du Châtelet would have conveyed it to Cirey. According to the project, Madame la Marquise was to preside at the case, that is to say, at the type-setting, with the aid of Lambert, who, with the assistance of his companion, was to work the press. They counted upon M. de Voltaire as proof-reader.

"All being thus very well arranged, there remained only one trifling difficulty, which madame flattered herself to be able to overcome easily: it was merely to get the author's consent. He ought to have been told of it the first, but he was told the last. She ended where she ought to have begun; for madame must have known that the operation could not go on in the château without M. de Voltaire's knowing it. She cherished the idea that to oblige her he would consent to a thing which would remain secret between them and a very small number of sure friends.

"She was deceived. Scarcely had she spoken a word of it, when he rejected the idea. At first he thought it was only a jest, but when he saw that the scheme was serious, and that preparations were already made, he was much excited, and dwelt with energy upon the consequences of such an enterprise; among others, the danger of seeing the book fall into the hands of strangers, whether by indiscretion or by accident, and so reach the public, which would expose both of them to serious inconveniences and bitter regrets. She could not resist the force of those reasons. It was no longer a question of printing 'La Pucelle.' She explained the matter afterwards to Lambert; the materials, which were still at Paris, were given back to the dealers, who consented to receive them, on being indemnified for their trouble. Lambert was recompensed for his pains, and took upon himself to satisfy the comrade whom he had engaged."

MADAME LA MARQUISE WILL NOT BE IMPOSED UPON.

"Madame la Marquise du Châtelet, who had much enjoyed her last visit to the court of the King of Poland, and had promised that prince to return the next summer, was well disposed to keep her word, and took, with M. de Voltaire, the resolution to go thither without stopping on the road, and the carriage was therefore furnished with some provisions. But on reaching Châlons-sur-Marne, madame felt herself slightly indisposed, and made the postilion stop opposite the Bell Inn. There, while they changed horses, she had a fancy to take a bowl of broth. The landlady, having ascertained who it was she had the honor to serve, came to the carriage door, having a napkin under her arm, a porcelain plate in her hand upon a silver tray, and a porringer of silver containing the broth. While madame was taking it the horses were already put to, and ready to start. I hastened to carry

back the plate and the other articles to the landlady, and asked her how much we had to pay. 'One louis,' said she. I was almost prostrated at this word; then, recovering from my astonishment, I cried out upon the enormity of the price, and said to her that I would have thought a crown, or even four francs, too much. She declared she could not abate one sou. Upon this I went to explain the matter to madame, who was of my opinion. The landlady, who had followed me, then approached the carriage door, and upon madame representing to her how excessive her demand was she replied that she was not accustomed to have her charges disputed, and that it was her fixed price. I took the liberty to remark that with a crown's worth of meat I could make several bowls of broth, and the meat would still remain over and above. Consequently I believed I should be paying her well in offering her that crown. She persisted, declaring that all the persons who did her the honor to alight at her house, whether they took only a fresh egg, a bowl of broth, or a dinner, invariably paid the same price. 'Very well,' replied I, 'we have not alighted; Madame la Marquise has not left the carriage, and has not set foot upon the threshold of your door.'

"M. de Voltaire, joining in the colloquy, said to the landlady, 'Your method, madame, seems to me as new as it is strange, and I believe it very little advantageous to your house; for, in fact, all travelers are not in a condition to give twenty-four francs for a bowl of broth, and for one or two customers who fall, without knowing it, into your net you are likely to lose a hundred others." Thereupon the woman began to be angry and to dispute with a loud voice, and at the noise she made one, two, three, four neighbors and more left their shops and came to hear what was going on. Soon a numerous populace ran from all directions and grouped themselves around the carriage, clamoring and wishing to know what was the matter. All asked and answered at the same time; it seemed as if a sedition was going to burst forth in the town. All that we could discern amid so many squeaking voices was that the landlady was in the right. M. de Voltaire saw plainly that there was no means of gaining the suit against so powerful a party. He was of opinion that it was necessary to give it up, and to get out of the scrape like Harlequin, that is, by paying. This I did, and we set out, not without exciting the laughter of all that crowd. Madame du Châtelet swore well that, no matter how exhausted she might be in traveling from Paris to Lorraine, she would never stop in that cursed town, and the broth of Châlons-sur-Marne was not rubbed out of her tablets."

VOLTAIRE AND LONGCHAMP MAKE A JOURNEY TO PARIS.

"Fifteen days after their arrival at Lunéville they learned by a letter from M. d'Argental that the French actors were preparing to give immediately the first representation of 'Sémiramis.' They would have both liked to be present; but madame, fearing to displease the King of Poland, consented to remain at Lunéville and to let M. de Voltaire set out alone for Paris. He took only me with him, and placed me on the front seat of the post-chaise. As he had time to spare, he resolved to visit on the way some persons of his acquaintance, and particularly to go through Reims, to see M. de Pouilli, his old college friend, who had invited him many a time. We started, and our first halt was at the country-house of the Bishop of Châlons-sur-Marne, a colleague of M. de Voltaire at the French Academy, and his friend. He was very well received, and passed three days there; and even on the fourth that prelate consented to his leaving with reluctance, because the weather was threatening. In fact, at the end of some hours the sky was covered with very black and frightful clouds; whirlwinds of dust almost hid the road from view; we were dazzled and deafened by the lightning and thunder. Half-way between Châlons and Reims this storm ended by a rain so abundant that the foot-path and ditches on each side of the road were both overflowed. M. de Voltaire, fearing to be overturned and drowned, made the chaise stop in the middle of the road, which, with the adjoining fields, was one sheet of water. He attentively considered this spectacle, and suffered much to see the postilion and his horses drenched while we were sheltered. At length, the weather improving and the waters having subsided, we could continue our journey, and at night-fall reached Reims. M. de Voltaire was expected, as he had sent a note from Châlons to M. de Pouilli, asking hospitality.

"A grand repast was prepared, to which had been invited several friends of M. de Voltaire; and they made it a festival to meet that celebrated man. The beginning of the supper was noisy enough, every one talking at once. The guests interrupted one another, and M. de Voltaire kept on eating and said not a word. At last, the desire to hear him speak induced a moment of silence. M. de Pouilli, then alluding to the dangers which M. de Voltaire had run upon the road, asked him some questions on the subject. Replying, he entered into details, and described the storm he had encountered in a manner so pathetic that the whole company listened with the greatest interest, scarcely daring to breathe for fear of interrupting him, or to lose a word of what he was saying. His narrative, however, was quite natural, without emphasis and without gesture. The truth of

the images, the simplicity of his words, their variety and suitableness, sufficed to excite the highest degree of emotion. Even I, who had been witness of the event, and who heard him relate it with the same attention as the guests, believed for the moment that I was again upon the high-road and in the midst of the inundation. After supper, when the company was gone, M. de Voltaire, before going to bed, talked again a quarter of an hour with M. de Pouilli, who felicitated himself upon having spoken of the storm. 'For my part,' he added, 'I was in no degree astonished at the impression which you made upon them; for I assure you that never did the description of a tempest give me more affright and at the same time more pleasure.'

"The next morning we took the road to Paris, where we arrived in the evening."

THE PLOT AGAINST THE NEW TRAGEDY.

"The actors had already had one rehearsal of the tragedy of 'Sémiramis.' They rehearsed it several times in the presence of the author, who gave them some useful hints, from which they profited. Although he was well enough satisfied with their ability, and could count upon their zeal, and had elaborated his tragedy with much care, he was far from daring to depend upon its success. He was not ignorant that Piron, who thought himself much superior to him, and was jealous of his successes, had fomented a powerful cabal against 'Sémiramis,' and that to this band were rallying the soldiers of Corbulon, as he used to call the partisans of Crébillon, in allusion to a passage in one of his pieces. The latter were in truth much less sincere admirers of their hero than jealous enemies of Voltaire; and as M. de Crébillon had also written a 'Sémiramis,' they assumed that no other author should dare to make a better one.

"To counterbalance this league, M. de Voltaire had recourse to a measure little worthy of him, indeed, but which he believed necessary, and which, in fact, was not without effect. He bought a number of pit tickets, which he gave to his friends and acquaintances, who in turn distributed them among their friends. Thieriot, Lambert, the Abbé de La Mare, and others, whose devotion he knew, acquitted themselves very well of this commission. I had also my share of tickets to give away, and I placed them in good hands; by which I mean hands capable of clapping well and at the proper places. The day of the first representation arrived (August 29, 1748). The champions on both sides did not fail to be present on the field of battle, armed *cap-à-pie*, among whom I held firmly my rank of foot-soldier. Each party was confident of victory, and the struggle was therefore hard and painful. Even during the first scene there was excitement in the

pit; some bravos, some murmurs, were heard, and even some faint hisses. But from the start the applause at least balanced the signs of discontent, and finished by stifling them. The piece held its own, ended very well, and its success seemed not equivocal. . . . . The antagonists of M. de Voltaire renewed their attempts on the following nights, but they served only the better to assure his triumph. Piron, to console himself for the defeat of his party, employed his usual resource, and assailed 'Sémiramis' with spiteful epigrams which did it harm."

THE AUTHOR OF "SÉMIRAMIS" GOES IN DISGUISE TO HEAR THE VERDICT OF THE CAFÉ DE PROCOPE.

"M. de Voltaire, who loved always to correct and improve his works, desired to know more particularly and with his own ears what was said for and against his tragedy, and he thought he could do this nowhere better than at the Café de Procope, which was called also the Cave of Procope, because it was very dark, even in broad daylight, and by no means well lighted in the evening, and because poets were often seen there, gaunt and pallid, who looked like ghosts. In this café, which is opposite the theatre, had been held for more than sixty years the tribunal of the self-styled Aristarques, who imagined themselves judges in the last resort of pieces, authors, and actors. M. de Voltaire wished to appear there disguised and entirely *incognito*. It was at the end of the play that the judges used to begin what they called their grand sessions.

"On the day of the second representation of 'Sémiramis,' he borrowed the garb of an ecclesiastic. He put on a cassock, with a long cloak, black stockings, a girdle, bands, and, that nothing might be wanting, a breviary. Upon his head he wore an ample wig without powder, ill dressed, which covered more than half his cheeks, and left visible scarcely anything of his face except the end of a long nose. This was surmounted by a large three-cornered hat, much dilapidated. It was in this costume that the author of 'Sémiramis' went on foot to the Café de Procope, where he established himself in a corner, and, while waiting for the end of the performance, called for a cup of tea, a roll, and a newspaper. He had not long to wait before the frequenters of the parterre and of the café arrived. There were present persons of both the parties, and they entered at once into the discussion of the new tragedy. His partisans and his adversaries pleaded with warmth, and gave reasons for their judgment. Some impartial persons offered their opinion, and repeated beautiful verses of the piece.

"All this time M. de Voltaire, with spectacles upon his nose, his head bent over the newspaper which he pretended to read, listened to

the debates, profited by the reasonable remarks, and suffered much from hearing absurd observations without being able to reply, which put him into bad humor. In this way, during an hour and a half, he had the courage and patience to hear people reason and gossip upon 'Sémiramis' without uttering one word. At length, all these pretended arbiters of the renown of authors having retired without converting one another, M. de Voltaire left also, took a cab in the Rue Mazarine, and reached home at eleven o'clock. Although I knew his disguise, I confess that I was again struck and almost frightened on seeing him accoutred as he was. I took him for a spectre of Ninus who was appearing to me, or, at least, for one of those Hiberian arguers arrived at the end of their career, after having exhausted themselves in syllogisms in the schools. I helped him shed all these traps, which I took back the next day to their true owner. After having made some corrections in several of the parts, and given them to the actors, M. de Voltaire did not wish to remain in Paris, and no longer doubting the success of his piece he set out satisfied, and eager to rejoin Madame du Châtelet at Lunéville."

VOLTAIRE RESCUES HIMSELF FROM DEATH AND A COUNTRY DOCTOR.

"M. de Voltaire, when he arrived at Paris (in August, 1748), did not enjoy very good health. A slow fever wore upon him severely. Rest and his usual regimen could have calmed and even cured him, but it was impossible to think of rest in Paris, where he was always in agitation: by day, visits and continual running about; at night, writing, kept up almost until morning. He scarcely reserved some hours for sleep. His fever increased. Although extremely fatigued and suffering much, he persisted not less in setting out for Lunéville.

"At Châlons, where we stopped at the post-house, it was necessary to rest, for it was impossible for M. de Voltaire to go further. He had no longer the strength to stand or talk, and I was obliged to carry him from his carriage to a bed. Fearing that this was the beginning of a dangerous disease, I thought it my duty to notify the Bishop and the Intendant of Châlons, who had always testified much regard for him. Both came to see him the same day, and pressed him to let himself be carried to one of their houses, that he might be the better cared for. M. de Voltaire excused himself from accepting their offer, assuring them that he already felt himself better since he had taken some repose in bed. The magistrate insisted upon sending him his own doctor, who, in fact, came to see him in the evening, examined him, and prescribed bleeding and various medicaments. M. de Voltaire listened to him with much patience, and replied to his questions as laconically as possible; but when the doctor was gone, he told me

that he should follow none of his directions, for he knew how to manage himself as well in sickness as in health, and he should continue to be his own doctor, as he had always been. The bishop and the magistrate then urged that, at least, some of their servants should come and take care of him. This offer he also declined, saying that a woman was already engaged to watch with him and make his broth, and that I should serve as her assistant and do his errands out-of-doors.

"M. de Voltaire had eaten nothing since we left Paris. As night was coming on, I proposed to him to take some broth, to which he consented; but scarcely had it touched his lips, when he pushed it away and shook his head, intimating that he did not wish any. Then, with a voice scarcely audible, he entreated me *not to abandon him, and to remain near him in order to cast a little earth upon his body when he had breathed his last.* I was surprised and still more alarmed at these words, and indeed not without reason, for that night was one of his worst. He had a burning fever accompanied by delirium, and when the fit was passed there was scarcely any life left in him. Next morning he was again visited by the bishop, the intendant, and the doctor. Those gentlemen could scarcely get a word from him, and they saw him steadily refuse all the drugs the doctor tried to make him swallow. On leaving him they did not conceal their apprehension of seeing him perish, and hasten his end by his obstinacy in refusing to take what they recommended for his relief.

"When they were gone he made me come near his bed, and putting into my hand a purse full of gold, which had been in the drawer of his night-table, he said to me that if he yielded to his malady his intention was that I should keep that sum, which was all the good he could do me at the moment; but if, on the contrary, he escaped the danger which threatened him, I was to give him back the purse, on account of the immediate use he should then have for it, and he would supply its place by a recompense with which I should be better satisfied. He prayed me not to abandon him in his present situation, and to remain with him to the last in order to close his eyes. I replied with tears that I would never leave him, that his orders were sacred to me, that I hoped still to see him restored to health, and that that was all I desired. I assured him he could count upon the sincerity of my words, for I loved him, and was truly attached to him.

"On our arrival at Châlons I had, unknown to him, written a few lines to Madame Denis and to Madame du Châtelet, to inform them of his sickness and of the place where he was. Nevertheless, as soon as he had come to himself, I asked him if he did not think I had better send for madame his niece to come and bear him company. He was then on ill terms with her, and had not seen her for some time.

He absolutely forbade me to write to her. However, I received every day letters from Madame Denis, and I gave her an account of her uncle's health by every courier who left for Paris, as also Madame du Châtelet by the couriers who went to Strasbourg by way of Lunéville.

"As he continued to be unwilling to take any solid food whatever, confining himself to certain drinks, such as weak tea, toast and water, and a very refreshing kind of barley water, slightly aperient, he became so weak that he could scarcely move any of his limbs. At length, in the evening of the sixth day after our arrival at Châlons, he astounded me by telling me to prepare everything for his departure, to pay what he owed, pack his trunk, and make arrangements for leaving Châlons very early in the morning, since he did not wish to die there. He added that if at the break of day he was still alive, whatever his condition might be, I had only to carry him to his post-chaise, and convey him to Lunéville. He dictated to me some lines to inform the bishop and the intendant of his sudden resolution, and to thank them for their attentions. The landlord was charged to forward those notes to them after our departure. Then he rested, and I occupied myself with the execution of his orders.

"The next day, all being ready and the horses harnessed, I carried him out to his post-chaise, wrapped in his dressing-gown, and a counterpane over it. I seated myself in front of him, so as not to lose him from my sight, and to hold him up if he should fall forward; to which precaution I added that of tying together the hand-straps at the sides, which formed a kind of barrier to keep him in place. It was in this way that I brought him from Châlons to Saint-Dizier [about thirty miles], without his uttering a single word. He was so weak, so pale, that I dreaded not to be able to get him to Lunéville alive. While we were changing horses at Saint-Dizier, he seemed as if to wake from a sleep all of a sudden, and asked me where we were and what o'clock it was. Having answered these questions, I asked him some questions in my turn, but he made no answer, and appeared to relapse into unconsciousness. We resumed our journey.

"Between Saint-Dizier and Bar-le-Duc we met a lackey, whom Madame la Marquise du Châtelet had sent on a post-horse to Châlons, to ascertain more particularly the condition of the sick man, and to see if he could bear transportation to Lunéville. I mentioned this to M. de Voltaire. It appeared to give him pleasure and restored him a little. The lackey returned, and served us as a courier to have horses got ready upon the road, so that we arrived at Nancy in the evening before the closing of the gates. We alighted at the post-house, where the lackey of madame waited upon us again, to know if there were

my orders for him. M. de Voltaire charged me to tell him to push on to Lunéville, so that madame should get news of him the sooner. As to himself, he could go no further without much risk. Exhausted with fatigue and inanition, I put him into a good bed on arriving, and had some broth brought to him. He drank the whole of it with relish. Having myself no less need of nourishment, for I had scarcely broken my fast all day, I had my supper brought into his chamber, where also I had a camp-bed put for myself; for I remained with him night and day. Seeing the avidity with which I devoured what they brought me, he said, 'How happy you are to have a stomach and a digestion!' He had seen disappear half a leg of mutton and a side-dish. They brought me, besides, two roast thrushes and a dozen red-throats, which latter are the ortolans of the country, and they were then in season. I asked him if he was not tempted to suck one of those little birds. 'Yes,' said he, 'I would like to try one.' I picked out two of the fattest, and carried them with a morsel of the crumb of bread to his bed, where, half reclining, he ate a good part of them with pleasure. Then he asked for a glass of wine mixed with a third of water, which also he swallowed briskly enough. After that he told me he felt some inclination to sleep, and that after I had finished my supper I had only to go to bed. The next morning, as soon as he awoke, we were to start for Lunéville.

"Then, putting his head upon the pillow, he soon fell asleep. For my part, I slept very well until five in the morning. By six all the arrangements for our departure were made, and I only waited for M de Voltaire to wake. I saw him in a sleep so profound that nothing could have induced me to interrupt it. I went from time to time to look at him, thoroughly resolved to let him wake of his own accord. I was far from expecting that that moment would not arrive until three o'clock in the afternoon. At that hour he drew aside his curtains, saying that he had slept well. He had slept better and longer than he supposed. I helped him get up and dress. That sleep had refreshed him, and I found him improved. After he had taken some broth with bread in it, we set out at five in the afternoon for Lunéville [ten miles distant], where we arrived easily the same evening. There M. de Voltaire found himself much better, and the presence of Madame du Châtelet completed his recovery. In a few days she made him resume all his usual gayety, and forget the tribulations he had experienced on his journey from Paris.

"Thus it was that M. de Voltaire cured himself of a malady which probably would have had graver consequences if he had delivered himself up to the Æsculapius of Châlons. His principle was that our health often depends upon ourselves; that its three pivots are sobriety,

temperance in all things, and moderate exercise; that in almost all the diseases, which are not the result of very serious accidents, or of radical vitiation of the internal organs, it suffices to aid nature, which is endeavoring to restore us; that it is necessary to confine ourselves to a diet more or less severe and prolonged, suitable liquid nourishment, and other simple means. In this manner I always saw him regulate his conduct as long as I lived with him."

The events related in these passages from the graphic Longchamp occurred between January, 1746, and September, 1748, when Voltaire rejoined madame at the mimic court of Stanislas, at Lunéville. One of his "anecdotes," which he tells circumstantially, and with a great number of names of persons concerned, has a particular interest for Americans, because it relates to the Count d'Estaing, who commanded a French fleet in American waters during the Revolutionary War, and afterwards died upon the guillotine in the French Revolution. This nobleman, still a young man when Longchamp left the service of Voltaire, had run so deeply into debt that there appeared no resource left to him but to sell his paternal estates, and reduce himself to absolute penury. Voltaire, one of the largest creditors, undertook to save the lands and put the young man's debts in a train of liquidation. He bought enough of the debts, at a serious reduction, to constitute him the chief creditor, and thus secured the legal right to control the affair. Other debts he arranged to pay at various periods, and converted others into annuities. By these and other devices he saved the estate entire, and enabled the count, while still enjoying a sufficient revenue, to relieve it from incumbrance within a reasonable time. "Often," adds Longchamp, "I have seen M. d'Estaing at the house of M. de Voltaire, whom he regarded as his best friend, and he said openly to those who talked to him of his affairs that if there remained to him something of his ancient fortune he was indebted for it to M. de Voltaire alone." [1]

[1] 2 Mémoires sur Voltaire et sur ses Œuvres, par Longchamp et Wagnière, ses Secrétaires, 115 to 223. Paris, 1826.

CHAPTER XLV.

DEATH OF MADAME DU CHÂTELET.

Perhaps it is fortunate for civilization that so many of the most conspicuous men of that century managed their relations with women so badly as they did. Their intense and shameful sufferings instruct the student of the art of living. We see them expecting to enjoy the good of women without paying the just price of that good. We see them shunning the salutary restraints of marriage, and enduring inconveniences ten times greater. The illustrious Goethe, a rover and a libertine from his youth, after shrinking from marriage with a kind of horror, found himself, in his declining years, mated to his inferior, a bloated drunkard, who transmitted her despotic appetite to their son; and that son, in his turn, became its abject slave, and died miserably in the prime of his life. Voltaire we have seen figuring for sixteen years as part of the baggage of a wild marchioness, enduring more than the cost and worry of married life, while enjoying very little of its peace, happiness, and dignity, and nothing at all of its greatest charm.

His long bondage was now to end in a catastrophe compounded of the farcical and the tragic. Nature cannot be cheated. Of all the multitudes of men who have attempted to steal a good, not one has ever succeeded; perpetual motion is not more impossible. In the affairs of sex, nature, so far as we can discern, has but one object, the production and due custody of superior offspring. She seems to regard nothing else as of the slightest importance; and since the production and due custody of even one child demands the affectionate coöperation of both parents for an average life-time, every healthy sexual instinct tends to life-long marriage. Nature will not be cheated in a matter of supreme importance. She bore much from this ill-regulated Du Châtelet, but turned upon her at last to wreak a sudden and horrible vengeance.

Madame du Châtelet recorded the decline of Voltaire's affection for her with great candor. She introduces the topic into her "Reflections upon Happiness."

"I received from God [she tells us] one of those tender and immovable souls that know not how either to disguise or moderate their passions; whose love knows neither decline nor disgust, and the tenacity of which is such as to resist everything, even the certainty of being loved no more. Yet I was happy for ten years through the love of him who had subjugated my soul, and those ten years I passed at his side without any moment of disgust or languor. When age, maladies, possibly also the satiety of enjoyment, had lessened his fondness, it was long before I perceived it. I loved for two; I passed my entire life with him; and my heart, free from suspicion, enjoyed the pleasure of loving and the illusion of believing myself loved. It is true that I lost that happy condition, and not without it costing me many tears. Terrible shocks are necessary to break such chains; the wound at my heart bled a long time. I had reason to complain, and I forgave all. I was even just enough to feel that, perhaps, in the whole world there was only my heart which had that immutability that annihilates the power of time. I thought, too, that if age and sickness had not entirely extinguished his desires they would still have been for me, and his love would have returned to me; and, finally, that his heart, though incapable of love, cherished for me the most tender friendship, and would have consecrated to me his life. The absolute impossibility of the return of his taste and of his passion, which I well knew was not in the nature of things, led my heart insensibly to the gentle sentiment of friendship; and that sentiment, joined to my passion for study, rendered me sufficiently happy." [1]

Which means that she had found another lover. At the distance of a day's ride eastward from Cirey was Lunéville, the principal seat of Stanislas, "King of Poland," father-in-law to the King of France, and Duke of Lorraine. He was an indolent, good-natured old gentleman, now a little past seventy, who amused himself by maintaining a court in the style then accepted in Europe as the true royal mode. That is to say, he kept a confessor and a mistress; he went to mass every morning; he was scrupulously polite to his wife; he corresponded with authors, wrote books, founded an Academy, gave prizes for poems, loved the drama, and doted upon Voltaire. His court, too, was a centre of intrigues, which were

[1] Lettres Inédites de Madame la Marquise du Châtelet. Paris, 1806. Page 369

as active and virulent as those of courts where a hundred times as much of the public money was wasted. Voltaire had been an occasional visitor at Lunéville for many years; but it was one of those petty court intrigues that drew him thither as a more established inmate.

The king, as Voltaire has recorded, "shared his soul between his mistress, the Marquise de Boufflers, and a Jesuit named Menou, the most intriguing and audacious priest I have ever known. This man had beguiled from King Stanislas, through the importunities of his wife, whom he governed, about a million francs, part of which he employed in building a magnificent house for himself and some Jesuits in the town of Nancy. This house was endowed with a revenue of twenty-four thousand francs, of which twelve thousand were for Menou's table, and twelve thousand were at his disposal. The mistress was far from being so well treated. She drew from the King of Poland scarcely money enough to buy her petticoats, and yet the Jesuit coveted her portion, and was furiously jealous of the marquise. They were openly embroiled. Every day the king had much trouble, on going out from the mass, to reconcile his mistress and his confessor. At length, our Jesuit, having heard Madame du Châtelet spoken of as a woman well formed and still handsome enough, conceived the project of putting her in Madame de Boufflers's place. Stanislas occasionally composed some sufficiently bad little works, and Menou believed that a woman who was an author would succeed better with him than another. It was he who came to Cirey to begin this game. He cajoled Madame du Châtelet, and told us that King Stanislas would be enchanted to see us. He returned to say to the king that we burned with desire to pay our court to him."

And, indeed, as Longchamp has already informed us, madame, from 1747, found herself very much at home at the little court, where all her talents were agreeably exercised. She acted, sang, danced, played, conversed, and translated Newton. But it was Voltaire who captivated the benevolent old king. "We attached ourselves," he says, "to Madame de Boufflers, and the Jesuit had two women to combat." The king's letters to Voltaire, of which several have been preserved, are warmly eulogistic, and he praises some of his writings of this

period in a manner which casts doubts upon his orthodoxy. Stanislas published, in 1749, his little work entitled "The Christian Philosopher," which was held by good Catholics to savor of heresy. His daughter, the Queen of France, read it with emphatic disapproval, and laid the blame of it at the door of her father's favored guests. They had perverted the good old man, she thought, and she did not love Voltaire the better for it. She wrote to her father that his book was the work of an atheist, and she entertained the opinion that Voltaire and Madame du Châtelet had first lured him from the path of virtue through Madame de Boufflers, and then stifled his remorse with irreligion.[1]

Voltaire soon felt this renewal of antipathy. After reaching Lunéville in September, 1748, he heard that a low burlesque of his "Sémiramis" was about to be performed at Fontainebleau. He begged the King of Poland to come to his bedside, and entreated him to forward to the queen, his daughter, a remonstrance against the sacrilege. The queen coldly replied that everything was parodied, even Virgil; parodies were in fashion; why should he complain? He then appealed to Madame de Pompadour, and she contrived to prevent the performance. Parodies, be it observed, were *not* then in fashion; they had been forbidden five years before, and the edict was still in force. Stanislas heaped favors upon the guests who amused him with such an enchanting variety of entertainments. He bestowed a solid boon upon Madame du Châtelet in 1748 by appointing her husband grand marshal of his household, at a salary of two thousand crowns per annum. He interested himself also in procuring for her son his first military commission, which was obtained about the time of this visit.

One of the officers of King Stanislas's little court was the Marquis de Saint-Lambert, afterwards celebrated as a poet, author of "Les Saisons," once rated by Frenchmen above "The Seasons" of Thomson. He was a native of Lorraine, a scion of an ancient house, though possessed of little fortune. He served for a while as an officer of Stanislas's guards, but afterwards accepted the post of grand master of the royal wardrobe. In 1747, when Madame du Châtelet first became inti

[1] Voltaire to Richelieu, August, 1750.

mate with him, he was thirty-one years of age, a well-formed, attractive young man, not less agreeable than when, in later years, he was a favorite in the circles of Paris. She was then forty-one. They were thrown much together at Lunéville, at Commercy, another abode of the King of Poland, and at Nancy, Saint-Lambert's native place. It was not long before she became furiously in love with him. As early as the spring of 1748, she wrote him a tumultuous letter, in which she expressed her passion without the least reserve. It is evident from this burning epistle and other hot notes of the same month of May, 1748, that she was the wooer of the young man, and that he yielded to her solicitations. She assures him that her love is without bounds, and tells him that her only fear is lest he should be unable to return her passion with the entire devotion she craves.

"Come to Cirey," she wrote, "to prove to me that I am wrong."

He came. He was with her at Lunéville, while Voltaire was sick on the road to Paris, and this was probably the reason why, in answer to Longchamp's letters, she only sent a lackey to inquire how he was. She was urgent in her love. "Come to me as soon as you are dressed," she writes in one flaming note; "afterwards you may ride on horseback if you wish." In another, "I shall fly to you as soon as I have supped. Madame de Boufflers is gone to bed." For several months this amour was in full tide without awakening the least suspicion on the part of Voltaire, who was doubtless relieved by it from some of the constraint in which he had lived. He probably owed to it his happy escape to Paris with Longchamp, and his gay meeting with old friends, untrammeled by madame's bandboxes. But the time came when he discovered it. We owe to the curious Longchamp some wondrous scenes that followed the discovery, which occurred at the château of the King of Poland at Commercy, twenty miles from Cirey: —

"One evening, M. de Voltaire, having come down-stairs before being called to supper, entered Madame du Châtelet's rooms without having been announced, there being no servant in the ante-chamber. He traversed the whole suite without meeting any one, and reached at length a small room at the end, half lighted by one candle.

There he saw, or thought he saw, Madame du Châtelet and M. de Saint-Lambert . . . . conversing upon something besides verses and philosophy. Struck with astonishment and indignation, unable to control his feelings, he broke out into violent reproaches. M. de Saint-Lambert, without being disconcerted, observed that it seemed to him very singular that any one should give himself airs to censure his conduct; if that conduct displeased any one, the person offended had but to leave the château, and he would follow, in order to explain himself in a suitable place. M. de Voltaire went out furious, ascended to his room, and ordered me to go at once to find a post-chaise that could be hired or bought, his own having been left at Paris; adding that, after having found it, I should get post-horses put to it, and bring it to the gate of the château. He said he was resolved to return to Paris that very night.

"Amazed at a departure so precipitate, of which I had not heard a word the evening before, and unable to divine the cause, I went in search of Madame du Châtelet, to inform her of the order I had just received, and try to learn from her what was the motive of it. She told me that M. de Voltaire was a flighty man [*un visionnaire*], who had burst into a passion because he had found M. de Saint-Lambert in her room. It was necessary, she added, to prevent his leaving and making an outcry, and that I must evade executing the commission which he had given me in a moment of fury. She would know how to appease him; it was necessary to let him discharge his first fire, and try only to keep him in his room the next day.

"I did not return to his room until toward two o'clock in the morning, when I told him that in all Commercy I had not been able to find a carriage, either for hire or sale. His servants lodged in the city; I slept alone in a small room near his chamber. Before going to bed, he drew from a secretary a small bag of money, which he gave me, saying that, after having rested, I was to go, at the dawn of day, hire a post-horse and ride to Nancy, whence I should bring him a carriage suited to his purpose. Seeing that he was still in the same resolution, I wished to give notice of it to Madame du Châtelet. Before retiring, I descended secretly to her room, where she was still occupied in writing. On seeing me, she first asked if M. de Voltaire was a little more tranquil. I replied that he appeared to be still irritated; that he had just gone to bed; but that probably he would sleep little during the night. Thereupon she dismissed me, saying that she was going up to speak to him.

"I returned softly to my little room. A few minutes after some one knocked, and I ran, with a candle, to open the door for madame

and to announce her to M. de Voltaire. Seeing me half undressed, he did not suspect that I had been forewarned of this visit. She entered the chamber almost at the same time as myself, and took a seat upon the foot of his bed. After having lighted two candles I withdrew; but I could hear part of their conversation through the very thin wall which separated me from the chamber; and, since the death of Madame du Châtelet, I have heard some details from Mademoiselle du Thil, her intimate confidante. While I was still with them, madame first addressed him in English, repeating a pet name in that language which she ordinarily called him by. After I was gone she spoke in French, and did what she could to soften him and excuse herself.

"'What,' said he, 'you wish me to believe you after what I have seen! I have exhausted my health, my fortune; I have sacrificed all for you; and you deceive me!'

"'No,' she replied, 'I love you always; but for a long time you have complained that you are sick, that your strength abandons you; I am extremely afflicted at it; I am very far from wishing your death; your health is very dear to me; no one in the world takes more interest in it than I do. On your part, you have always shown much interest in mine; you have known and approved the regimen which suits it; you have even favored and shared it as long as it was in your power to do so. Since you agree that you could not continue to take care of it except to your great damage, ought you to be offended that it is one of your friends who supplies your place?'

"'Ah, madame,' said he, 'you are always right; but since things must be as they are, at least let them not pass before my eyes.'

"After half an hour's conversation, madame, seeing that he was a little more calm, bade him adieu with an embrace, and urged him to give himself up to repose. She then retired.

"She had already taken much trouble to appease M. de Saint-Lambert, who still wished to have satisfaction for the insult which he pretended to have received from M. de Voltaire. She succeeded in mollifying him, and she determined him even to take measures for the restoration of good-will between them, persuading him that this was his duty, were it only from deference to the age of M. de Voltaire. The latter, after the interview with madame, slept for some hours, and did not leave his rooms that day. Toward evening, M. de Saint-Lambert called, alleging that he was anxious concerning the health of M. de Voltaire. Astonished to see him, I went to announce him to M. de Voltaire, who permitted him to enter. The young man, approaching with a modest air, began by apologizing for the words, a little animated, which had escaped him in a moment of trouble and agitation.

Scarcely was his sentence finished, when M. de Voltaire seized him with both hands, embraced him, and said, —

"'My child, I have forgotten all, and it was I who was in the wrong. You are in the happy age of love and delight. Enjoy those moments, too brief. An old man, an invalid, like me is not made for the pleasures.'

"The next day all three supped together as usual. A few days after this adventure, M. de Voltaire began to compose a comedy in one act and in verse, wherein all that had happened was delineated under a veil of allegory. The characters, the passions, were depicted in it with as much energy as truth. The author judged it proper to suppress the manuscript of this piece, some verses of which are to be found in 'Nanine,' another comedy, which was also written at Commercy some time after."

The autumn of 1748 rolled away. Voltaire, having recovered his health and composure, designed to spend part of the winter at Paris, where he hoped to see "Sémiramis" revived, to present to the public a new tragedy, and submit to the King of France some chapters of his history of the late campaigns. Madame was to leave her young lover for a while, and accompany her old "friend" to the capital; not to share his expected triumphs at the theatre and the court, but to finish at Paris her version of Newton's "Principia," with the aid of M. Clairaut, her instructor in mathematics.

"Before going to Paris [continues Longchamp] she desired to arrange a matter of business with one of her farmers near Châlons; whence she proposed to go on to Cirey, in order to audit the accounts of the men who had the management of her foundries and forests. Both having taken leave of the King of Poland, they set out from Lunéville toward the middle of December, 1748. On approaching Châlons at eight o'clock in the morning, Madame la Marquise was very far from stopping to take a bowl of broth at the inn. She was driven to the country-house of the bishop, whom she knew to be at home. He received our travelers with pleasure, and caused a good breakfast to be served to them. Madame's farmer, notified by one of the postilions, came to meet her there, and the regulation of his account was neither long nor difficult. At the same time the other postilion had been charged to bring a change of horses by half past nine at the very latest.

"The farmer having gone, madame took a fancy, while waiting for the horses, to propose to some gentlemen who were at the bishop's

house to play a game of comet or cavagnole, games then in fashion. They yielded to her desire, and play began. It was much prolonged. Meanwhile the horses were at the door, and the postilions, tired of waiting, sent in to say that if the travelers were not going to start they would take the horses back to the stable. They received orders in reply to do so, since the travelers would not set out till after dinner, and to bring the horses back at two o'clock. The postilions executed punctually these orders; but, dinner over, madame and her friends began again to play at comet. The game was long. It was raining. The postilions, chilled to the bone in the rain, did not cease to crack their whips in the most furious manner. That game over, Madame du Châtelet, who was on the losing side, asked her revenge. Another game was begun. Then the postilions, losing all patience, swore like mired cartmen; and if they had been their own masters they would have abandoned their horses. To quiet them they were told to put the horses into the stables of the château, and were assured that the time lost would be amply paid for. At length, the day was entirely spent. It was eight o'clock in the evening. Then M. de Voltaire, to whom this delay was not agreeable, and Madame du Châtelet, who cared nothing about it, thanked and took leave of the very obliging prelate, and resumed their journey.

"It had rained all day; the weather was still bad and the night very dark. Mounted upon a large white horse, I rode on before to have the relays ready for them. It was not possible for me to see two paces ahead, and unfortunately, while directing my horse by chance, I got out of the middle of the road, and went headlong into the ditch. Losing my seat, I was precipitated over the head of the animal, and found myself stretched at length at the bottom of the ditch, with a part of the horse resting upon me. . . . . The postilion who was sent to find me, having heard my cries, ran up to me and assisted me to reach the carriage. They had me placed beside the *femme de chambre*, for I was bruised and could no longer ride on horseback. I reached Cirey, suffering much pain and in a miserable condition; but rest and the care lavished upon me restored me, and prevented the serious results which the accident might have had, some of the consequences of which I felt for several years.

"Two or three days sufficed for madame to transact the business which brought her to Cirey before going to Paris, where she expected to pass the winter. When not studying she was always lively, active, and good-humored. In the midst of her preparations for departure she appeared all at once abstracted, melancholy, restless. She had discovered, from various symptoms, that she was in a way to become a mother again, at the age of forty-four years. She was terrified at the

prospect. How to conceal her condition and its consequences, and especially from M. du Châtelet?

"M. de Voltaire, struck with a change in her demeanor, so sudden and so extraordinary, asked her with concern what was the reason of it. She gave it without hesitation. He was not very much astonished. The information could not give him pleasure; but, on learning it, he thought only of tranquillizing Madame du Châtelet, and preventing its affecting her to the point of making her sick. He told her that there was no occasion for despair, and nothing in her case at all supernatural. It became them, he said, to consider the matter coolly, with good sense and prudence, and decide what was the best course to take in the circumstances. His advice was, first of all, to send for M. de Saint-Lambert, that they might all three take part in the deliberation. Informed by M. de Voltaire of the business in hand, M. de Saint-Lambert was at Cirey the day after he received the notification.

"A council was immediately held. A mischance which seemed to be of a nature to displease equally each of the three personages, as parties in interest, and to separate them forever, served, on the contrary, only to unite them the more. The event, serious as it was, was even turned into jest. Nevertheless, they considered first if there was any way of concealing from the public, and, above all, from M. du Châtelet, the condition of madame and its natural consequence. It was decided that both her character and propriety forbade the long and indispensable precautions which such a scheme would involve; and even were she capable of submitting to them the least indiscretion, the merest accident, might cause the plan to fail. The questions then arose how the pregnancy should be announced, and to what father the child should be assigned; which latter seemed very embarrassing to M. de Saint-Lambert and to Madame du Châtelet.

"'As to that,' said M. de Voltaire, 'we will put it among the miscellaneous works [*œuvres mêlées*] of Madame du Châtelet.'

"On discussing the thing more gravely, it was agreed not to falsify the legal axiom, that *he is the father whom the nuptial relation indicates*, and that the child belonged of right to M. du Châtelet. To him, then, it was resolved to give the child; but the difficulty was to make him accept it. All being well weighed and deliberated, they agreed that madame should write at once to her husband, who was then at Dijon (one hundred and twenty miles distant), and invite him to come immediately to Cirey to arrange some family business, so as to avoid a lawsuit with which she was threatened. She pressed him to come also for the purpose of receiving the money she had collected at Cirey for the expenses of the next campaign, adding that, if the

war continued, he was to have a higher grade, which she had assisted to obtain for him by her influence.

"The marquis flew to Cirey, where he was received with lively demonstrations of tenderness and regard on the part of his wife, as well as of respect and joy on that of his vassals. He was rejoiced to find there M. de Voltaire and M. de Saint-Lambert, who neglected nothing that could render his visit to his estate agreeable, despite the season. He was flattered with so much cordiality, seemed extremely cheerful, and responded by unequivocal marks of friendship. Madame invited several noblemen of the neighborhood to spend some days at the château to augment the satisfaction of her husband. They gave him little *fêtes*, and even theatricals. During the first days she employed a great part of the morning with him arranging the affairs of the house, while the guests were hunting. At dinner great cheer was made. The marquis performed well his part at table, having previously gained a good appetite in going to see his farmers and inspecting his forges and his woods. After dinner they had cards and other amusements; but nothing surpassed supper in agreeableness and gayety. All the guests were in the best humor, and testified their delight in seeing M. du Châtelet again. Every one talked with the greatest freedom of whatever interested him, and M. le Marquis du Châtelet related some stories of the last campaign in Flanders. They seemed to listen to him with great interest, and he was much flattered by it. They let him talk and drink as much as he liked. When he ceased, others told pleasant tales, said good things, and gave some curious anecdotes. M. de Voltaire went beyond all the rest, and heightened the general gayety by the drollest and most diverting stories.

"Madame du Châtelet, who on that day was dressed with extreme elegance, sat next her husband, and said some agreeable and happy things to him, paid him, without affectation, pretty little attentions, which he took in good part, and to which he responded by addressing flattering compliments to his wife. M. de Voltaire and M. de Saint-Lambert exchanged glances, and secretly rejoiced to see that all was going so well. Indeed, during dessert the marquis was in a beautiful humor, and became entirely gallant. His wife appeared in his eyes such as he had beheld her at twenty. He felt himself transported back to the same age, and played the young man. . . . . During this little conjugal colloquy the other guests, animated by champagne, talked loudly of hunting, fishing, horses, and dogs. But M. de Voltaire and M. de Saint-Lambert, interested in another matter, read with great pleasure in the face of M. du Châtelet, and still better in the eyes of his wife, that their project would be accomplished accord-

ing to their intention. In fact, from that night the pair occupied the same suite of rooms. Nothing was neglected to sustain the illusion during the following days. They kept the marquis in play. Pleasure followed pleasure, and his lovely humor was maintained in the midst of the gayety by which he was surrounded. Three weeks and more passed in a kind of enchantment, and then madame declared to her husband that, from certain signs, she had reason to believe herself *enceinte*.

"At this news M. du Châtelet thought he should faint with joy. He sprang to the neck of his wife, embraced her, and went to communicate what he had heard to all his friends who were in the château. Every one congratulated him, and called upon madame to testify the interest they took in their mutual satisfaction. The news was immediately spread into the neighboring villages. Gentlemen, lawyers, large farmers, came to compliment M. du Châtelet. He received them all to admiration. Perhaps he was secretly flattered to prove to them that he could still be of service elsewhere than in the field. This gave occasion to new rejoicings at Cirey. At length the time arrived for M. du Châtelet to return to his post, and he took his departure. M. de Saint-Lambert went back to Lunéville. Madame la Marquise and M. de Voltaire renewed preparations for their journey to Paris. All four set out from Cirey, well content with what had passed there."

Thus, Longchamp. On reading his unique narrative we naturally turn to the correspondence of the characters who figure in it, to see if it harmonizes with his statements. We find that it does. December 1, 1748, Voltaire wrote at Lunéville to the D'Argentals at Paris, "Divine angels, I shall be under your wings at Christmas." This accords with Longchamp's information that they left Lunéville for Paris toward the middle of December, intending to make but a brief stay at Cirey for business only. *Something* not expected detained them there until the end of January, 1749. January 21st, Voltaire wrote to D'Argental from Cirey, "Madame du Châtelet has just finished a preface to her Newton, which is a *chef d'œuvre*." January 26th, he wrote from Cirey a long letter to the King of Prussia, and did not begin to send letters from Paris until February. Thus, ample time was afforded (six weeks) for the performance of the amazing comedy described by a secretary of inquiring mind.

More than this, Voltaire's presence in Paris, during all that

long period of detention in the country, was vehemently desired by his friends, and particularly by his guardian angels, the D'Argentals, ever watchful for his interest. The actors and the public were waiting for his coming with impatience that "Sémiramis" might be revived, with the author's last corrections and improvements. Never before had the clique hostile to him been more active, more resolute, more hopeful; and a tragedy was his favorite means both of offense and defense. D'Argental wrote urgently for his coming. Madame du Châtelet, as we have observed, was one of those ladies who can look out from the warm shelter of an elegant room, and bear, with perfect equanimity for many hours, the inconveniences suffered by postilions in the piercing rain of a French December. She was hard put to it on the present occasion to account for this unforeseen delay in a manner that would satisfy the Count d'Argental. January 13th, she wrote to him, "If I thought that the presence of M. de Voltaire was necessary at Paris, I would leave everything to bring him thither; but, in truth, I think it is best to keep the public fasting with regard to 'Sémiramis,' so that they may long for it as it merits. I am sure of M. de Richelieu, and know that the parody upon 'Sémiramis' will not be played. These are my principal reasons for not abandoning the very essential and tedious business which I am transacting at Cirey. A forge-master who is leaving, another who takes possession, some woods to examine, some disputes to reconcile, — all that, without losing a moment, cannot be accomplished before the end of the month." [1]

All of which confirms the narrative of Longchamp.

They were established, then, at the Du Châtelet mansion in Paris early in February, 1749. Each of them was at once absorbed in intellectual labor, madame being passionately intent upon completing her Newton before returning to the country on a less agreeable errand. Were they really on as cordial terms as before? They were always liable to tiffs and scenes; and if age had cooled Voltaire's temperament it does not appear to have quieted his nerves. Let Longchamp relate two scenes between them at Paris, which occurred while the lady was closeted daily and nightly with her professor of mathematics, reading proofs and verifying algebra: —

[1] Lettres, page 481.

FIRST SCENE.

"Upon their return to Paris, madame plunged again into the sciences, and invited M. Clairaut, of the Academy of Sciences, to come and examine her work upon Newton and go over the calculations. M. Clairaut came every day, and went with her to a room in the second story, where they shut themselves up in order not to be interrupted. There they passed a great part of the day, and in the evening they usually supped with M. de Voltaire, who then kept house, and occupied rooms on the first floor. For some days he had not been well, and complained that his digestion was out of order. When that was the case, his usual remedy was to confine himself to a strict diet, and drink abundantly of very weak tea.

"One day, when his affairs had obliged him to take several walks in Paris, finding in the evening that he had gained a little appetite, he asked to have supper somewhat earlier than usual, and told me to go and call the two learned persons, Madame du Châtelet and M. Clairaut. Madame, who was deep in a calculation which she wished to finish, asked a respite of a quarter of an hour. M. de Voltaire consents, and waits patiently. Half an hour passes, and no one comes. He makes me go up-stairs again. I knock, and they cry out to me, 'We are just coming down!' Upon receiving this answer, M. de Voltaire has the soup brought in, and takes his seat at the table, expecting the company immediately. But they come not, and the plates are getting cold. Then he gets up, furious, rushes up the stairs, and, finding their door locked, he gives it a tremendous kick. At this noise, being obliged to leave their work, the two geometers rise and follow him with some confusion. As they were going down-stairs he said to them, 'You are then in a conspiracy to kill me?' Usually their supper was cheerful and very long, but that night it was very short; scarcely anything was eaten; each of them, with eyes fixed upon his plate, said not a word. M. Clairaut left early, and it was some time before he came to the house again."

SECOND SCENE.

"M. de Voltaire went to bed, but could not sleep all night, so much was he excited by the events of the evening. The next morning, madame sent some one to his room to ask how he was, and to know if he desired her to come and breakfast with him. He answered that if she wished to come she should be well received. A moment after, madame came down, holding in her hand a superb cup and saucer of Saxony porcelain, which he had given her, and which she loved to use. They were very large, all gilt inside, and the outside adorned with a landscape containing a great number of figures very well painted,

which formed some charming pictures, as well from the elegance of the design as from the brilliancy of the coloring. M. de Voltaire told me to pour into it some coffee and cream, which having done I withdrew. Madame, while sipping her coffee, began to speak to him of what had passed the evening before, reproaching him for his quickness of temper and excusing herself for keeping him waiting. She was standing with her cup in her hand, and, while sipping and talking, she had come very near the *fauteuil* on which he was seated. Suddenly he rose, as if to make room for her to sit beside him, and, in rising, he struck madame with his left shoulder, which caused the cup and saucer to fall from her hands and break into a thousand pieces. Roused by this noise, I reëntered. Madame, much attached to this little article, and having quite as quick a temper as M. de Voltaire, said to him in English some words which I did not understand, and, without waiting for his reply, went up to her room, extremely irritated, as it seemed to me.

"As soon as she was gone out, M. de Voltaire called me, told me to pick up the pieces and put them upon the table. He chooses one of the largest pieces, and tells me to go at once to the shop of M. la Frenaye, jeweler, to buy a cup and saucer exactly like the fragment, if he has one such. At the same time he gives me a little bag of money to pay him. But among all the porcelains which adorned the shop, I found not one cup of the pattern I wished. Having chosen one of those which seemed most like it, I asked the price. Ten louis. The bag was two or three louis short of this sum, and I asked M. la Frenaye to send one of his men with three or four of his most beautiful breakfast cups, that M. de Voltaire might choose the one he liked best. The man brought six. Having selected the most elegant, and at the same time the most expensive, M. de Voltaire haggled much about the price; but gained nothing by it, the man protesting that ten louis was the cost price, and that it was impossible to abate anything. M. de Voltaire finished by counting out to the man the ten louis, not without regretting the expense, and saying between his teeth that madame ought to have taken her coffee in her own room before coming down to his. Nevertheless, he sent me to make his excuses for his ill-temper, and to carry her this new coffee-cup, which she received with a smile. Their reconciliation was prompt, and this little disturbance had no after-effects."

The weeks flew by, as only time can fly which is spent in mental labor. Madame might well be excused for keeping her companion waiting for his supper. She spared herself no more than she considered him. She was under a terrible pressure. She worked upon her Newton as ambitious or procrastinating

students work during the ten days before their final examination. She wrote, at the same time, burning letters to her absent lover, lamenting her long detention, and explaining its cause.

[May 18, 1749.] "No; it is not possible for my heart to express to you how it adores you. Do not reproach me for my Newton; I am sufficiently punished for it. Never have I made a greater sacrifice to reason than in remaining here to finish it; it is a frightful labor, — one that demands a head and health of iron. . . . . *Mon Dieu!* how amiable M. du Châtelet is to have offered to take you with him [to Cirey]!"

[May 20th.] "My departure hence does not depend absolutely upon me, but upon Clairaut and the difficulty of my work. I sacrifice everything to it, even my shape, and I beg you to remember it if you find me changed. Do you know the life I have led since the departure of the king? I get up at nine, sometimes at eight; I work till three; then I take my coffee; I resume work at four; at ten I stop to eat a morsel alone; I talk till midnight with M. de Voltaire, who comes to supper with me, and at midnight I go to work again, and keep on till five in the morning. . . . . I must do this, or else I must either renounce the idea of lying in at Lunéville, or lose the fruit of my labors if I should die in child-bed. . . . . With regard to the fear you have of being alone with M. du Châtelet, it does not depend entirely upon me to secure you against it; and if you prefer seeing me ten or twelve days later to risking that accident I have nothing to say. . . . . I can love nothing but what I share with you; for, at least, I do not love Newton. I finish it from reason and honor; but I love only you." [1]

This work upon Newton, published in 1756 by her distinguished teacher, Alexis Clairaut, in two quarto volumes, involved very severe and long-continued toil. She attempted in it to do for Newton's "Principia" what Mrs. Somerville afterwards accomplished for the Astronomy of Laplace. She translated the Latin into French, and amplified the demonstrations so as to bring the work within the grasp of advanced French students of mathematics. The title finally given it by M. Clairaut was "The Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy." How much of the work was done by the teacher and how much by the pupil will never be known. At the end of May she saw her last of Paris, and went to pass the

[1] Lettres. Paris. 1878. Page 487.

lovely days of June at beautiful Cirey, her work still incomplete.

They spent most of the summer at Lunéville, where madame chose that her child should be born, because there its father could be near her at the critical time. Both Voltaire and herself continued to labor with an intensity which was extraordinary even for them. At Lunéville, being separated from his books and papers, and kept long waiting for the expected child, he had no resource but in original composition. The Duchess du Maine had suggested to him a subject for a new tragedy, the Conspiracy of Catiline, recently treated by the aged Crébillon. He thought of it during these summer weeks of tedious waiting. Kindled by the project of his Paris enemies to exalt above him the veteran dramatist just mentioned, whose "Catiline," despite all their efforts, had signally failed, he now had one of his frenzies of inspiration, and wrote in eight days and nights his tragedy of "Rome Saved." It was a wonderful feat. Every other day, he says, madame looked up from her Newton to be astounded by his bringing in two new acts. But here is one of his own accounts of the mad fit, written August 12, 1749, at Lunéville, to D'Argental: —

"Read, only read, what I send you! You are going to be astonished; I am, myself. On the 3d of the present month the devil, saving your grace, took possession of me, and said, Avenge Cicero and France; wash away your country's shame! He enlightened me; he made me imagine the wife of Catiline, etc. This devil is a good devil, my angels; yourselves would not do better. He made me work day and night. I thought I should die of it; but what does that matter? In eight days, — yes, in eight days, and not in nine, — Catiline has been done; and the first scenes, very nearly as first written, I send you. It is all done in the rough, and I am quite exhausted. I shall send it to you, as you may well believe, as soon as I have put the last hand to it. You will see in it no amorous Tullia, no go-between Cicero; but you will see a terrible picture of Rome. I shudder at it still. Fulvia will rend your heart. You will adore Cicero. How you will love Cæsar! How you will say, This is Cato's self! And Lucullus, Crassus, what shall we say of them? Oh, my dear angels, 'Mérope' is scarcely a tragedy in comparison. But let us employ eight weeks in correcting what we have done in eight days. Believe me, believe me, *this* is the true tragedy!"

[Again, August 16th.] "This post ought to convey to my divine angels a cargo of the first two acts of Catiline. But why entitle the work Catiline? Cicero is the real hero of it: he it is whose glory I wished to avenge; it was he who inspired me, he whom I tried to imitate, and who occupies all the fifth act. I pray you, let us call the piece Cicero and Catiline."

The heat of creation having subsided, he labored more peacefully at correcting his work, keeping an eye ever upon Paris, and beginning already to make partisans for the new play by giving early accounts of its progress. The Duchess du Maine was of course promptly notified. The President Hénault, a French Horace Walpole, rich, critical, and friendly, was amply advised. The zealous Marmontel was not overlooked. The author, meanwhile, on surveying his work more at leisure, found abundant faults in it, and did, in fact, spend much more than eight weeks in correcting the composition of eight days.

August drew towards its close, and still madame kept them waiting. The officers and servants of the King of Poland did not all appreciate the merits of guests who stayed so long, increased their labors, and, perhaps, in some instances, curtailed their perquisites. One M. Alliot, aulic councilor, administrator of the king's household, did not approve the system of M. de Voltaire in confining himself so much to his own rooms, instead of taking sustenance in the usual place. He was slack in supplying a frenzied tragic poet with such homely necessaries as "bread, wine, and candles." But he found that the tragic poet was a person who knew his rights as a king's guest. Voltaire wrote an exquisitely polite letter to M. Alliot, informing him that at the court of his majesty of Prussia he was not obliged "to importune every day for bread, wine, and candles." "Permit me to say to you," he added, "that it belongs to the dignity of the King of Poland and the honor of your administration not to refuse these trifling attentions to an officer of the court of the King of France, who has the honor to pay his respects to the King of Poland."

This note was ostentatiously dated "August 29th, at a quarter past nine in the morning." He waited just half an hour. Receiving no answer, he wrote to the king himself, dating his letter "August 29th, at a quarter to ten in the morning."

"Sire, when we are in Paradise, it is necessary for us to address ourselves to God. Your majesty has permitted me to pay you my court until the end of autumn, when I shall not be able to avoid taking leave of your majesty. Your majesty is aware that I am very sick, and that unceasing labors, not less than my continual sufferings, retain me in my own rooms. I am compelled to beseech your majesty to give orders that the director of your majesty's household shall condescend to pay me those attentions, necessary and suitable to the dignity of your abode, with which your majesty honors foreigners who come to your court. Kings, from the time of Alexander, have had it in charge to nourish men of letters; and when Virgil was in the house of Augustus *Alliotus*, aulic councilor to Augustus, caused Virgil to be supplied with bread, wine, and candles. I am sick to-day, and have neither bread nor wine for dinner. I have the honor to be, with profound respect, sire, of your majesty, the very humble servant."

The wine, the bread, and the candles were not again withheld by an aulic councilor, the king having given orders to that effect. Madame Alliot, we are informed, was extremely *sotte* and superstitious, and did not enjoy this irruption of French pagans into a quiet château with a chapel and a daily mass. One day she chanced to be in the same room with Voltaire while a frightful thunder-storm was passing over Lunéville, and she did not conceal her apprehension that his presence much enhanced the danger the château was in from a vengeful bolt. "Madame," said he, pointing to the sky, "I have thought and written more good of him whom you are so much afraid of than you will be able to say of him in the whole of your life."[1]

So passed these summer months. September came in. Madame du Châtelet still labored assiduously at her Newton, not neglecting her part in amusing the good-natured old king. Gay as she seemed, she was not, as Longchamp assures us, without occasional fears. She sent to Paris for her old friend, Mademoiselle du Thil, who obeyed her summons. She arranged her papers, and had them divided into parcels, which she caused to be sealed and directed. She made Longchamp promise to deliver them to their addresses if she should not survive. September 4th her child was born. All went as favorably as possible, and Voltaire wrote three merry notes to convey the news to anxious friends in Paris.

[1] 73 Œuvres de Voltaire, 46. Note by another hand.

"This evening [he wrote to the Abbé de Voisenon] Madame du Châtelet, being at her desk, according to her laudable custom, said, '*But I feel something!*' That something was a little girl, who came into the world forthwith. It was placed upon a volume of geometry which happened to be lying near, and the mother has gone to bed. As for me, not knowing what to do during the last part of her pregnancy, I set myself to make a child all alone, and in eight days was delivered of 'Catiline.' It was a jest of nature to wish that I should accomplish in a week what Crébillon took thirty years to do. I am astonished at the accouchement of Madame du Châtelet, and terrified at my own. I know not if madame will imitate me and be pregnant again; but as soon as I was delivered of 'Catiline' I had a new pregnancy, and produced upon the spot an 'Electre'" [another subject of Crébillon's].

In the same light tone he wrote to other friends that night, while, as he said, mother and child "slept like dormice." "I am a hundred times more fatigued than she is," he wrote to D'Argental.

For four days she continued to do well. The child was christened in the chapel, and given out to nurse, after the French custom. The fourth day was very warm, and the mother, being slightly feverish, felt the heat extremely. She told her *femme de chambre* to bring her some iced *orgeat*, a favorite summer drink of the time, made of almond paste, sugar, and water. Persons near her bed remonstrated urgently. She insisted, and drank of the ice-cold liquid a large tumblerful. Alarming symptoms immediately declared themselves. Doctors were summoned; her husband was sent for. Powerful remedies having relieved her, again every one hoped for her speedy restoration. Two days passed. September 10th, late in the evening, Voltaire, the Marquis du Châtelet, and other friends were seated at the supper-table of Madame de Boufflers, in another part of the château. Saint-Lambert and Longchamp watched in the sick-room. All of them were relieved and cheerful. Suddenly, ominous sounds were heard from the bed, — a rattling, hiccoughs, a struggle for breath. They rushed to her side. She seemed to have fainted. They raised her, gave her the vinaigrette, rubbed her feet, struck her hands, and employed all the usual remedies. She never breathed again. She was dead when they reached her bedside.

From the merriment of the supper-table Voltaire, the hus-

band, and all the guests, upon hearing the awful and unexpected tidings, ran to the chamber. The consternation was such as we should imagine. To sobs and exclamations of grief and horror a mournful silence succeeded. M. du Châtelet was led out; the other guests went away; and, finally, the two men who had most reason for emotion remained alone by the side of the bed, speechless and overwhelmed. Voltaire staggered out of the room like a man stunned and bewildered, and made his way, he knew not how, to the great door of the château, at the head of the outside steps. At the bottom of those steps he fell headlong, close to a sentry-box, and remained on the ground insensible. His servant, who had followed him, seeing him fall, ran down the steps, and attempted to lift him up. Saint-Lambert came, also, and assisted to get him on his feet. He recognized Saint-Lambert, and said to him, sobbing, as Longchamp reports, "Ah, my friend, it is you who have killed her for me." Then, suddenly coming to himself, as if from a deep sleep, he cried, in a tone of mingled despair and reproach, "Oh, my God, sir, what could have induced you to get her into that condition?" Saint-Lambert said nothing, and Voltaire was led away to his room.

Among the crowd of distracted persons who had rushed into the chamber on the first alarm was Madame de Boufflers. As she was going out, half an hour later, she took Longchamp aside, and told him to see if the deceased had upon her finger a cornelian locket-ring; and if she had, to take it off and keep it until further orders. He obeyed, and the next day gave the ring to Madame de Boufflers, who picked out of the locket, with a pin, a portrait of Saint-Lambert, and then gave back the ring to Longchamp, to place it among the other effects, for the Marquis du Châtelet. Two or three days after, Voltaire, being a little calmer, asked Longchamp for the same ring, which, he said, contained his own portrait. The secretary informed him that his portrait was not in the ring at the time of madame's death. "Ah!" exclaimed Voltaire, "how do you know that?" Longchamp related what had passed. "Oh, heavens!" cried Voltaire, rising to his feet and clasping his hands. "Such are women! I took Richelieu out of the ring. Saint-Lambert expelled me. That is in the order of nature; one nail drives out another. So go the things of this world!"

Longchamp, obeying the orders which madame had given him, distributed the papers she had left sealed and directed. Last of all he delivered those addressed to her husband. One of the parcels was a large case, locked, and sealed in several places, with the key in a sealed packet tied to one of the handles. Upon the cover of the case madame had written with her own hand: —

"*I pray M. du Châtelet to be so good as to burn all these papers without looking at them. They can be of no use to him, and have no relation to his affairs.*"

The husband, upon opening the case, was disposed to disregard this request; but his wiser brother, the Count de Lomont, who was present, told him that he ought to respect the last wishes of his wife, and not abuse the mark of confidence which she had shown him. The marquis, however, persisted in reading a few of the uppermost letters, which, says the observant Longchamp, caused him to make a wry face and shake his ears. His brother, saying that he was well paid for his curiosity, ordered a lighted candle, emptied the case into the fire-place, and set fire to the papers. There were several thick and solid packets of manuscript among the mass, which burned slowly. Longchamp, kneeling down before the fire-place to quicken the blaze, contrived to rescue, on the sly, Voltaire's "Treatise upon Metaphysics" and several letters. Even those letters were afterwards destroyed; so that of the hundreds of letters which must have passed between Voltaire and Madame du Châtelet only one trifling, jocular note of his is known to exist.

She went beyond her right in consigning some of these papers to the fire; for among the mass were important memoranda and documents, collected by Voltaire for his historical works, of which she disapproved, as well as some compositions similar to the metaphysical treatise, which she deemed unsafe for him to possess. He lamented deeply this irreparable loss, and mentions it in the preface to his "Essai sur les Mœurs," with an expression of respect for her memory, which he never omitted on any fair occasion as long as he lived. From *him* the public never learned anything but good of the woman he had loved.

Madame du Châtelet was buried at Lunéville, with the

pomp and ceremonial then customary. Her child lived but for a short time, and passed away lamented by no one, — the mere incidental supernumerary of a drama in which nature meant her to be the chief personage. And these wonderful events, known to many persons immediately, brought no reproach upon any of the actors. Saint-Lambert, in the drawing-rooms of Paris, was regarded as a sort of hero of romance. "*It made him the fashion*," says the "Nouvelle Biographie," and led the way to other "conquests," and to a long career of social as well as literary distinction in the metropolis of his country. Voltaire remained on friendly, even cordial, terms with him as long as he lived, as both did with the family of the Du Châtelets. Frederic of Prussia was duly advised of what had occurred by his French correspondents. We find among his poetical writings of 1749 an epitaph upon Madame du Châtelet, to this effect: —

"Here lies one who lost her life from the double accouchement of a 'Treatise of Philosophy' and of an unfortunate infant. It is not known precisely which of the two took her from us. Upon this lamentable event what opinion ought we to follow? Saint-Lambert assigns it to the book; Voltaire says it was the child." [1]

[1] 14 Œuvres de Frédéric le Grand, 169.

CHAPTER XLVI.

THE WIDOWER.

In some very bad marriages, Mr. Emerson wisely remarks, there is a fraction of true marriage. In Voltaire's connection with Madame du Châtelet, there was, on his side, a large ingredient of true marriage. To the vow which sealed their union he was faithful against the solicitations of the most seductive king in Europe. He was faithful to it when it became oppressive. He was faithful when she was faithless; and, after having been faithful to her person while she lived, he was singularly so to her name and honor after she was dead. He had loved this woman, and he lived with her in that kindly illusion which in happy marriages casts a pleasing veil over ugly faults, and sets good qualities in bright relief. Parents habitually think of their children as they appear to them in their best moments and moods. So he thought of her. There had been, moreover, a genuine communion of spirit between them, and they had often been true companions to each other. Longchamp has told us how they sat together on the carriage cushions, in the wintry night, lost in the contemplation of the starry heavens which spoke to them of Newton's immortal glory. As that incident gave dignity to a situation otherwise ridiculous, so such communion of soul, though but occasional and brief, redeemed the quality of their connection.

He was heart-broken at her loss. "Ah, my dear friend," he wrote to D'Argental on that fatal night, "I have only you left upon the earth!" It distressed him that he had written of the birth of her child in so light a tone. "Alas, madame," he wrote to the Marquise du Deffand, "we had turned that event into a jest; and it was in that unfortunate tone that I wrote, by her order, to her friends. If anything could augment the horror of my condition, it would be to have taken with gayety an adventure the result of which poisons the remainder

of my miserable life." In a similar strain he wrote to other friends during the first hours of his bereavement. Longchamp testifies that the death of his Emilie overwhelmed him. He avoided all company, and remained alone in his chamber, absorbed, sad, suffering, a prey to the most doleful thoughts. His life was shattered, and he knew not how to begin to reconstruct it, so accustomed was he to depend upon her for direction, as well as companionship. His first thought was to retire to the Abbey of Sénones, of which Dom Calmet was the chief, a laborious writer upon theology and history, whose extensive collection of books Voltaire had frequently drawn upon during his long visits to the court of the King of Poland. The Abbey of Sénones was near the château of that king at Commercy, in Lorraine. Soon abandoning this idea, he thought of seeking an asylum with Lord Bolingbroke in England, and actually wrote a letter, as Longchamp asserts, to Bolingbroke, announcing his loss, and saying that he was disposed to seek consolation at his abode. The letter does not appear in his works, and seems to have had no consequences.

The inevitable duties of the crisis called him from his solitude, and after the funeral he went to Cirey with Longchamp, where he was joined soon by the Marquis du Châtelet and his brother. Here he was in some degree consoled by sympathizing letters from his guardian angels in Paris, the truest and fondest friends of his long life.

"You make my consolation, my dear angels [he wrote]; you make me love the unhappy remainder of my life. . . . . I will confess to you that a house which she inhabited, though overwhelming me with grief, is not disagreeable to me. I am not afraid of my affliction; I do not fly that which speaks to me of her. I love Cirey; I could not support Lunéville, where I lost her in a manner more awful than you think; but the places which she embellished are dear to me. I have not lost a mistress; I have lost the half of myself, a soul for whom mine was made, a friend of twenty years, whom I knew in infancy. The most tender father loves not otherwise his only daughter. I love to find again everywhere the idea of her; I love to talk with her husband, with her son. . . . . I have been reading once more the immense materials relating to metaphysics which she had gathered with a patience and a sagacity which used to frighten me. With all that, how was it possible for her to cry over our tragedies? She had the

genius of Leibnitz, with sensibility. Ah, my dear friend, we do not know what a loss we have suffered!"

Longchamp, meanwhile, was packing for transportation to Paris his books, marbles, bronzes, pictures, telescopes, air-pumps, and his other apparatus, much of which was placed in large barrels, and all was sent to his old abode in Paris. He had a settlement of accounts with M. du Châtelet, much to the advantage of that incomprehensible husband. He had essentially promoted the fortune of the bereaved family, and continued to be of service to it. He had, as before mentioned, lent the marquis forty thousand francs for the restoration of the old château at Cirey, receiving, by way of interest, an annuity of two thousand francs. For several years he had been in the habit of making a present to the marquis of a receipt for the amount of the annual sum. When the Brussels lawsuit had reached a favorable stage, it was Voltaire who negotiated and affected a compromise, by which the Du Châtelets surrendered their claim for the sum of two hundred thousand francs in ready money. He then proposed to the marquis to terminate their pecuniary relations at once and forever by selling him back his annuity for the sum of fifteen thousand francs. Du Châtelet gratefully accepted this proposal, and contrived to pay ten thousand francs of the sum agreed upon, leaving five thousand unpaid at the time of his wife's death. This debt Voltaire now formally relinquished, asking only in return a few mementos which he had himself given her, such as his own miniature set in diamonds, and some articles of furniture which he had bought for her at a sale.[1]

It is interesting to observe how scrupulously he used the forms of respect demanded by the rank of this husband, to whom he was so strangely related. In giving an account of these transactions to that husband's elder sister, he says, "The marquis deigned to accept from an old servant this arrangement, which he would not have accepted from a man less attached to him. . . . . I value his friendship above five thousand francs."

After a stay of fifteen days at Cirey, Longchamp packing, himself working a little upon his "Rome Sauvée," he returned

[1] Voltaire to the Countess de Montrevel (sister of the Marquis du Châtelet), November 15, 1749.

by easy stages to Paris, and took up his abode in his old quarters, Rue Traversière, now hired by him from the Marquis du Châtelet. The house was a roomy old mansion in the Faubourg St. Antoine, not very far from the Bastille. The marquis, who cared little for Paris or the court, but loved his gun and dogs, retained the first and second floors, and let all the rest to Voltaire. The rooms would scarcely contain the multitude of things brought from Cirey, which were heaped up pell-mell, as Longchamp records, a chaos of splendid and interesting objects, which could neither be enjoyed nor seen. The owner wandered about among them, sick, sorrowful, inconsolable, sleepless, admitting only his guardian angels, the D'Argentals, and Richelieu, and them not often. He never went out.

"During the nights [says Longchamp] he would get up, all agitation, and, fancying he saw Madame du Châtelet, he would call to her, and drag himself with difficulty from room to room, as if in search of her. It was the end of October, and the cold was already somewhat severe. In the middle of a certain night when he could not sleep, he got up out of bed, and after groping a few steps about the room he felt so weak that he leaned against a table to keep from falling. He remained standing there a long time, shivering with cold, and yet reluctant to wake me. At length he forced himself to go into the next room, where almost all his books were heaped upon the floor. But he was far from remembering this, and, his head always filled with the same object, he was endeavoring to traverse the room, when, running against a pile of folios, he stumbled and fell. Unable to rise, he called me several times; but so feeble was his voice that at first I did not hear him, although I slept near by. Waking, at last, I heard him groan and faintly repeat my name. I sprang up, and ran toward him. Having no light, and going very fast, my feet became entangled with his, and I fell upon him. Upon getting up, I found him speechless and almost frozen. I made haste to lift him to his bed, and, having struck a light and made a great fire, I endeavored to warm him by wrapping his body and limbs in very hot cloths. That produced a good effect. Gradually I saw him coming to himself; he opened his eyes, and, recognizing me, he said that he felt very tired and had need of rest. Having covered him well and closed his curtains, I remained in his room the rest of the night. He soon fell asleep, and did not wake until near eleven in the morning."

Longchamp claims to have assisted his recovery by means

still more effectual. Among the letters which he had saved from the conflagration of madame's papers there were some in which she had spoken of Voltaire with great freedom. We know that she did this in conversation. With several of these letters within easy reach, Longchamp ventured to say to his "dear master," whom he saw perishing daily, that he was very much in the wrong to mourn so deeply the death of a lady who had not loved him. "What!" he cried. "Mordieu! She did not love me?" "No," said Longchamp; "I have the proof in my hand, and here it is." He gave him the letters, which he read, and remained silent a long time. "She deceived me!" he said at length, with a sigh; "who would have believed it?" From that hour, according to the secretary, he began to recover his cheerfulness, and never again left his bed in the night pronouncing the name of Emilie.

Something of this kind may have occurred; for, no doubt, a person so little accustomed to restrain her tongue had frequently given full play to her pen. The Abbé de Voisenon, a warm friend of the marquise for many years, has a brief passage on this point: "Madame du Châtelet concealed nothing from me; I remained often alone with her until five in the morning. . . . . She said to me sometimes that she was entirely detached from Voltaire. I made no reply. I took one of the eight volumes [of manuscript letters from Voltaire to the marquise, which she had had bound in eight beautiful quartos], and I read some of the letters. I observed her eyes moisten with tears. I promptly shut the book, saying, 'You are not cured!' The last year of her life, I put her to the same test. She criticised them; I was convinced that the cure was accomplished. She confided to me that Saint-Lambert had been the doctor."[1]

Voltaire's letters of this melancholy time harmonize with his secretary's narrative. The letters of October are in the tone of despair. In those of November much interest is shown in his usual pursuits, and he renews his labors to complete and perfect his new plays. He wrote often to the Duchess du Maine, "*ma protectrice*," arranging with her the details of a first performance on her private stage at Sceaux of "Rome Sauvée," in which the author himself was to play

[1] Quoted by Desnoiresterres in Voltaire à la Cour, page 180.

the part of Cicero. The drama, always his consolation when other sources of enjoyment failed, was his chief means of restoration now, as it doubtless will be, finally and forever, the most constant solace of toil-worn mortals. By Christmas, too, he had put his house in order. He took the whole of the large house from the Marquis du Châtelet, and so found room for his furniture and objects of art. He invited his niece, Madame Denis, to live with him and do the honors of his abode. She was abundantly willing, and about Christmas took possession of the keys and governed his house. His other relations frequently visited him, and assisted to cheer his existence in the most natural manner. Madame Denis, whatever her faults, was at least a woman of the world, a true *Parisienne*, interested in art and society, ambitious to shine. She had herself written a comedy, was somewhat proficient in music, and could take a part in a play with some credit. "I have returned to Paris," wrote Voltaire to Frederic, November 10, 1749. "I have gathered my family about me; I have taken a house, and I find myself the father of a family, without having any children. Thus, in my grief, I have formed an honorable and quiet establishment, and I shall spend the winter in completing these arrangements."

It seemed, then, that he had won at last, at the age of fifty-six, a suitable and becoming home in his native city. The Hôtel de Richelieu was close at hand. The D'Argentals were not far from him. Several of the friends of his early days were still living, — the Abbé d'Olivet, D'Argenson, Thieriot, and others. He was rich beyond the most sanguine dreams of his youth. Longchamp gives us the catalogue of his revenues for this very year, 1749, amounting to seventy-four thousand francs. He informs us, also, that this catalogue was incomplete, and that the actual income was probably eighty thousand francs, a sum equal in purchasing power to perhaps fifty thousand dollars of our present currency. It was a large income for the time, one that placed every reasonable gratification within his reach. It was an income, too, of which the fiat of no man could deprive him. He did not yet own a foot of land. He drew his revenue from the bonds of the city of Paris, from mortgages, from annuities upon the estates of great lords. He had twenty sources of supply, which could

not all fail him, let him be compelled to fly to the ends of the earth. He kept his resources in light marching order.

France had been at peace since 1748. Why should he not henceforth remain at home, cultivate his art, amuse Paris, enjoy his celebrity, and glide tranquilly into the veteran? Because he was Voltaire; because France was France; because he had scarcely yet begun the work which makes him a personage in the history of man; and because, until a man's work is substantially done, it is in vain that he seeks the repose of the chimney corner.

CHAPTER XLVII.

HOUSEHOLDER IN PARIS.

It is evident from his letters of this time that he considered himself settled for life. His intention was, after spending the winter in Paris, to visit the King of Prussia, and then gratify a long-cherished desire of making the tour of Italy. He wished to see Rome, and the two buried cities in which the past had been preserved for the inspection of modern eyes. This desire appeased, he meant to return to his home in Paris, and resume there his life of toil and pleasure.

He did not know as well as we now do how completely he had lost his court favor. Neither Richelieu nor Pompadour could hold their own, in such a cause, against Boyer, the queen, the dauphin, the princesses, and the antipathy of the king. Nevertheless, on one condition, he could have lived in peace in his house the rest of his days: he must have discontinued the important part of his career; he must have let the Boyers remain in unmolested possession of the intellect of France. But this was impossible to him. He might as well have tried to live without breathing.

Longchamp has already told us the story of the publication of "Zadig," one of a series of satirical tales, which he composed from 1746 to 1750. How could an author expect court favor while publishing burlesques so effective as these of every court abuse, and even of court personages, transparently disguised? There was one little tale of his, called "The World as it Goes, or the Vision of Babouc," which had been circulating two or three years under an equally transparent veil of the anonymous. Babouc was commissioned by the presiding genius of Asia to visit the city of Persepolis, to see if it was deserving of destruction or only of chastisement. Babouc was Voltaire, and Persepolis was Paris. Every fault of the *régime* was touched lightly, but in a way that made it ridic-

ulous forever. The needlessness of the war then wasting France, promotion by intrigue of mistresses, the "good old times" superstition, the burial of the dead under churches, the sale of offices, the persecution of philosophers, all the topics, important and unimportant, were treated with his own grace, brevity, and point.

Babouc enters a sombre and vast inclosure filled with the old and ill-favored, where some people paid money to others for the privilege of seating themselves. He thought it must be a market for the sale of rush-bottomed chairs. "But immediately, seeing several women going down upon their knees, pretending to look straight before them, and eying men furtively, Babouc perceived that he was in a temple." A young man who had bought a judgeship consults an old lawyer as to the decision he ought to give in a cause. "But," asks Babouc, "why is not the old man on the bench?" Babouc visits the great college of mages, or priests, the chief of whom confessed that he had a revenue of a hundred thousand crowns a year for having taken the vow of poverty. Babouc admires "the magnificence of that house of penitence."

Another of these tales was called "Memnon, or Human Wisdom," a burlesque of those luxurious theologians of the century whose fundamental maxim was that partial evil is the general good. It was Pope's all-is-as-well-as-possible theory of the universe. It was the theory of comfortable, solid men, who have little sympathy and less imagination. A burlesque of a system of philosophy would have been harmless enough from any other pen. But Voltaire must needs bring his battered enthusiast to court, "with a plaster on his eye and a petition in his hand," to get redress for outrageous wrongs. There he meets several ladies wearing hoops twenty-four feet in circumference, one of whom, eying him askance, said, "Oh, horror!" Another, who knew him a little, said to him, "Good evening, Monsieur Memnon; indeed, Monsieur Memnon, I am very glad to see you. Apropos, Monsieur Memnon, how came you to lose an eye?" And she passed on without waiting for an answer. Finally, he throws himself at the king's feet, and presents his petition. The king receives it very graciously, and hands it to a satrap for examination and report. The satrap draws Memnon aside, and says to him,

with a haughty air and a bitter sneer, "I find you a pleasant style of one-eyed man to address yourself to the king rather than to me, and still more pleasant to dare ask justice against an honest bankrupt, whom I honor with my protection, and who is the nephew of a *femme de chambre* of my mistress. Abandon this affair, my friend, if you wish to keep your other eye!"

After many adventures of this kind, poor Memnon, who began life with sanguine hopes of attaining perfect happiness by the exercise of perfect virtue, comes to the conclusion that this little terraqueous globe of ours is the mad-house of the universe. All of which was very amusing except to parties burlesqued, who owned France and kept the key of the Bastille.

Another of these airy tales was called "History of the Travels of Scarmentado, by Himself," a burlesque of religious intolerance, that compels the reader to laugh and shudder at the same moment. Scarmentado visited Rome under Leo X. to find it a scene of debauchery and rapine; France, desolate by sixty years of religious wars; England, where he was shown the place on which the blessed Queen Mary, daughter of Henry VIII., had burned five hundred of her subjects; Holland, where he saw the bald head of the prime minister, Barneveldt, cut off, because he believed men were saved by good works as well as by faith. At Seville, on a lovely spring day, when all breathed abundance and joy, Scarmentado witnessed a glorious festival. The king, the queen, and their children, little girls as well as boys, were seated on a magnificent platform in a public square. "Some very beautiful prayers were chanted; the forty guilty ones were burned by a slow fire; at which all the royal family appeared to be extremely edified." Scarmentado found a Spanish bishop boasting that they had drowned, burned, or put to the sword ten millions of infidels in America, in order to convert the Americans. He gravely remarks thereupon, "I believe that this bishop exaggerated; but if we should reduce those sacrifices to five millions, it would still be admirable."

The traveler continues his journey round the world, and everywhere finds men waging cruel war against men for opinions and usages, monstrous or trivial. On reaching Ispahan, for example, he was assailed by a terrible question: "Are you

for the black sheep or the white sheep?" He replied, "It is indifferent to me, provided the mutton is tender." Both sects set upon him as a vile scoffer, and he had to fly for his life.

Then came "Zadig," the story he had read piecemeal to the Duchess du Maine in the small hours of the morning. This was the longest of the series, but it could be read in an evening, and it was full of offense. To Madame du Maine, every scene was a satire of the life she daily witnessed; nearly every name was the pseudonym of a person she was familiar with. The story begins thus: "In the time of King Moabdar, there was at Babylon a young man named Zadig." She took it otherwise: "In the time of Louis XV., there was in Paris a young man named Voltaire." That is to say, it was the mind of Voltaire before which now passed in rapid review the state of things existing in her world. In this work he attacked Boyer under so obvious an anagram that no one failed to recognize the ancient Bishop of Mirepoix. He called him "*Yebor*, the most stupid of the Chaldeans, and therefore the most fanatical." A controversy raged in Babylon as to whether there was such an animal as a griffin. "Why," said one party, "should Zoroaster forbid the eating of griffins, if there are no griffins?" Zadig sought to reconcile the embittered sects by saying, "If there are griffins, let us not eat them; if there are none, we shall still less eat them; and, in either case, we shall obey Zoroaster." This was flat heresy. A learned person, who had written thirteen volumes on the properties of the griffin, hastened to accuse Zadig before the fanatical Yebor, who would gladly have impaled him for the greater glory of the sun, and recited the breviary of Zoroaster on the occasion, with the most satisfied tone. A friend took up the young heretic's defense. "Beware of punishing Zadig!" he cried; "he is a saint. He has some griffins in his poultry-yard, and yet does not eat them. His accuser is a heretic, who dares maintain that rabbits have cloven feet, and are not unclean." "Very well," said Yebor, shaking his bald head, "it is necessary to impale Zadig for having thought ill of griffins, and the other for having spoken amiss of rabbits." The friend arranged the matter through his mistress, "a maid of honor," and no one was impaled.

The trivial nature of the theological controversies of the

day was variously burlesqued in this story. "For fifteen hundred years Babylon had been divided into two irreconcilable sects: one maintaining that to enter the Temple of Mithra except with the right foot first was an abomination, and the other denouncing all who presumed to enter except with the left. The bold Zadig jumped into the temple with both feet, and proved in an eloquent discourse that God was no respecter of persons, and cared no more for one foot than the other. The tale alluded also to the malign whisperers of the antechamber, who every day uttered some new charge against a loyal servant of the king. "The first accusation is repelled; the second grazes; the third wounds; the fourth kills."

Besides these fictions, there was a piece of similar tone which assailed superstition in a more direct manner, called "The Voice of the Sage and of the People." It was a series of short paragraphs, tending to show that it is religious enthusiasms that waste the wealth of nations and menace the tranquillity of kings. "Here is a convent with two hundred thousand francs of annual revenue. Reason says, Divide that estate among a hundred officers, who would marry and rear citizens for their country." It was superstition that assassinated Henry III., Henry IV., and the Prince of Orange, besides causing to flow rivers of common blood. But no philosopher had ever raised a parricidal hand against his king, or advised disobedience to the laws. Reason perfected would destroy the very germ of religious wars, which the philosophic spirit had already banished from the world.

It was not, however, such passages as these that made the "Voice of the Sage" so offensive to the Bishop of Mirepoix and his colleagues. The question of taxing the vast property of the church was assuming importance, and this pamphlet presented the question in such a way that it seemed to admit of only one answer. He went to the root of the matter: —

"There ought not to be two authorities in a state.

"The distinction between spiritual authority and temporal authority is a relic of Vandal barbarism, as if, in a house, two masters should be recognized: I, who am the father of the family; and, besides me, the tutor of my children, to whom I pay wages.

"I desire that very great respect be paid my children's in-

structor, but I am very far from wishing him to have the least authority in my house.

"In France, where reason becomes more developed every day, reason teaches us that the church ought to contribute to the expenses of the nation in proportion to its revenues, and that the body set apart to teach justice ought to begin by giving an example of it.

"That government would be worthy of the Hottentots in which it should be permitted to a certain number of men to say, 'Let those pay taxes who work; we ought not to pay anything, because we are idle.'

"That government would outrage God and men in which citizens should be able to say, 'The nation has given us all we have, and we owe nothing to it except prayers.'"

This "Voice of the People," a short essay, which the reader might not observe in the multitudinous writings of the author, was the sensation of the year in ecclesiastical circles. It was a Voice that awoke many echoes. Replies, refutations, and parodies appeared in such numbers that as many as fifteen are known and catalogued at this day. There was the "Voice of the Priest," the "Voice of the Bishop," the "Voice of the Pope," the "Voice of the Fool," the "Voice of the Women," the "Voice of the Poor Man," the "Voice of the Rich Man," the "Voice of the Poet," the "Voice Crying in the Wilderness," the "Voice of the Christian," and, finally, a volume containing all these Voices. A little pamphlet has seldom raised such a storm.

These brief notices of his lighter labors during the last years of Madame du Châtelet's life will suffice to explain the loss of any little favor he may have won at court by two years of toil for its amusement. These tales and essays were easy to read, short, full of that satirical gayety which Frenchmen are quickest to appreciate, and not wanting in weighty truth most needful for citizens to know. The king himself probably had mental force enough to read works so adroitly adapted to the inert intellect. The queen, too, and her dull little court may have been equal to some of them; and there are always people close at hand to minister to the passions of those who control the expenditure of a nation's revenue. A notable scheme was conceived in 1748, as Marmontel records, to assail Voltaire in the

very citadel of his power. His dramatic celebrity, as we have before seen, he habitually used as a means of self-protection. When a storm lowered, when he felt a *lettre de cachet* in the air, he seems always to have gone to his portfolios and rummaged for a new tragedy; for even the most servile minister hesitated to launch a bolt at a man who had just given Paris a new pleasure and the king's reign a new glory. But now the hostile faction disinterred a rival to Voltaire in the drama itself.

Crébillon, the dramatist of a former generation, was still living, seventy-four years of age, in obscurity, most of his great successes of other days forgotten. He had written effective tragedies, chiefly remarkable for their power to excite terror. Being questioned, after the successful production of one of his terrific plays, "L'Atrée," as to his reason for choosing that line, he answered, "Corneille has appropriated heaven, and Racine the earth. Nothing remained for me but hell, and I threw myself into it headlong." Marmontel, who was now an established man of letters, a favorite of the reigning mistress, was an eye-witness of the attempt made to resuscitate the aged poet, and restore to him the first place in the drama of France.

"Crébillon [he tells us], old and poor, was living in the vilest part of the Marais, laboring by starts at that 'Catilina' which he had announced for ten years, and of which he read here and there some bits of scenes that were thought admirable. His age, his former success, his somewhat rough manners, his soldier-like character, his truly tragical face, the air, the imposing though simple tone in which he recited his harsh and inharmonious verses, the vigor, the energy, he gave to his expression, all concurred to strike the mind with a sort of enthusiasm.

"The name of Crébillon was the rallying cry for the enemies of Voltaire. 'Electre' and 'Rhadamiste,' which were sometimes still played, drew but thin houses. All the rest of Crébillon's tragedies were forgotten; while those of Voltaire, 'Œdipe,' 'Alzire,' 'Mahomet,' 'Zaïre,' and 'Mérope,' were often performed in all the splendor of full success. The partisans of old Crébillon were few, but noisy. They did not cease to call him the Sophocles of our age; and, even among men of letters, Marivaux used to say that all the fine wit of Voltaire must bow before the genius of Crébillon.

"It was mentioned before Madame de Pompadour that this great,

neglected man was suffered to grow old without support, because he was without art and intrigue. This was touching her in a tender part. 'What say you?' cried she. 'Crébillon poor and forsaken!' She instantly obtained for him a pension of two thousand francs from the privy purse.

"Crébillon was eager to thank his benefactress. A slight indisposition kept her in bed when he was announced. She desired he might come in. The sight of this fine old man touched her; she received him with an affecting grace. He was moved by it; and, as he leaned over her bed to kiss her hand, the king appeared. 'Ah, madame,' cried Crébillon, 'the king has surprised us! I am lost.' This sally from an old man of (nearly) eighty pleased the king. The fortune of Crébillon was decided. All the little courtiers launched into praises of his genius and manners. 'He had dignity,' said they, 'but no pride, and still less vainglory. His poverty was the proof of his disinterestedness. He was a venerable character, and the man whose genius truly honored the reign of the king.' 'Catilina' was mentioned as the wonder of the age. Madame de Pompadour wished to hear it. A day was fixed for the reading; the king, present, but invisible, heard it also. It had complete success; and, on its first performance, Madame de Pompadour, accompanied by a crowd of courtiers, attended with the most lively interest. A little time afterward Crébillon obtained the favor of an edition of his works at the press of the Louvre, the expense defrayed by the royal treasury. From that time Voltaire was coldly received, and he left off going to court."

The reader does not need to be informed that Voltaire was not the person to submit to an intrigue of this nature. His way of meeting it was one possible only to himself. He selected for the theme of his next tragedy the story of Sémiramis, Queen of Babylon, a subject which had once been treated by Crébillon. The success of this powerful play was not as decided as Longchamp imagined. All depended upon the ghost scene, which the author again attempted, still remembering the effect of the ghost in Hamlet on the London stage. But the crowd of dandies on the stage left, as Voltaire remarked, "scarcely more than a space of ten feet wide for the actors," and thus the awful power of the ghost scene in the third act, so necessary to the effect of the later scenes, was fatally marred. On the succeeding nights, more room was retained for the actors; and unprejudiced spectators agreed in assigning this tragedy a rank among the masterpieces of the French

drama. It has retained its place on the stage to this day. But, for the moment, it failed of the effect the author, at the moment, desired. The forced success of Crébillon's "Catilina" followed. Voltaire, as we have seen, was roused by it to write a tragedy upon the same subject, and, almost before the ink was dry, threw himself upon another of Crébillon's subjects, — "Electre," — and produced a tragedy which he entitled "Oreste." These two pieces — "Rome Sauvée" and "Oreste" — were in the author's portfolio, though still under revision, when he returned to Paris after the death of Madame du Châtelet in October, 1749.

The very actors had caught the infection of his ill-favor at court. They had been restive under his exactions for the due presentation of "Sémiramis," the short run of which had not tended to make them more submissive. He would have four men in the wings to extinguish the candles, and another man to lower the foot-lights, in order to "execute the night," on the appearance of the ghost. He was himself a good actor, and he had, as all good actors have, the stage-manager's instinct sensitively alive. He insisted on having his dramatic conceptions conveyed to his audiences as vividly as the art permitted. One result of the imperfect success of "Sémiramis" and the ostentatious "protection" bestowed upon Crébillon" was an ill-feeling between himself and the company of actors attached to the Théâtre-Français. "Sarrasin," he wrote to D'Argental, "spoke to me with much more than indecency when I begged him, on behalf of the public, to put into his playing more soul and more dignity. There are four or five of the actors who refuse me the salute, because I made them appear upon the stage as silent spectators. La Noue has declaimed against the piece much more loftily than he declaimed his part. In a word, I have experienced from them nothing but ingratitude and insolence."

Established now in a spacious house of his own, his melancholy in some degree dispelled, his friends and family about him, he resolved to dispense with these ungrateful actors, without depriving himself of the pleasure their art had afforded him. He had a great room in his second story arranged as a little theatre, capable of seating a hundred persons and of containing a hundred and twenty. Longchamp had brought him

a good account of a company of young amateurs, who were in the habit of playing for their own amusement twice a week in a hall hired by themselves, and Voltaire sent them a polite invitation to visit him. One of these amateurs was a goldsmith's son, named Lekain, then just of age, who was destined to a long and splendid career upon the Paris stage. It was the ever assiduous Longchamp who bore Voltaire's invitation to the company.

"My message [he says] was received by all of them with as much joy as surprise. They promised to call upon M. de Voltaire, and it was agreed that they should come at ten o'clock in the morning. On the day fixed, the entire troupe, including even the candle-snuffer, arrived punctually at the rendezvous. No one on that day had neglected his toilet, and all those young people were extremely well dressed. I conducted them to the drawing-room. A moment after, M. de Voltaire appeared. He began by thanking them for their good-will and for complying with his desire so promptly. Addressing each in turn, he ascertained their line of parts and the pieces in which they played with most success. He questioned Lekain much, whom I had described as the best performer of the company. Then he invited the five or six principal actors to declaim some passage taken indifferently from one of their parts. In general, he appeared tolerably satisfied; he encouraged them, and promised them some instruction from which their talent could profit if they were willing to receive it with docility. At length, in order to judge them better, he engaged them to come the next day, towards six o'clock in the evening, to play upon his stage the tragedy they knew best. They acquiesced at once in this request, and several voices said that the tragedy which they played most willingly and successfully was 'Mahomet, the Prophet.' A desire to pay court to the author of that piece may have had some influence in determining their choice.

"However that may be, the thing was so arranged, and the next day they played the tragedy of 'Mahomet' in the hall he had prepared, the only spectators being M. de Voltaire, Madame Denis, M. and Madame d'Argental, the Duke de Richelieu, and M. de Pont-de-Veyle, a brother of M. d'Argental. I also was present at this representation, according to the injunction of M. de Voltaire. Two or three persons attached to the house may also have been there. Lekain played with force and intelligence, and, above all, with much earnestness, the part of Mahomet, which he has since performed in a manner so superior upon the public stage. The other parts were played sufficiently well. M. de Voltaire saw with pleasure the union

of those young people, their zeal, their correctness, and the unity which they knew how to give to the execution of his piece, though they were occasionally interrupted. This performance was, to speak precisely, only a general rehearsal. The author stopped the actors from time to time, and made them begin a scene again, showing to each the gesture and tone suitable to his part and to the situation.

"Upon the whole, he was well enough content with this first performance. He invited both actors and spectators to remain to supper, and, at the end of the repast, he brought the parts of his 'Rome Sauvée,' and distributed them to those young people, requesting them to learn their parts as soon as they could. . . . . He engaged Lekain, in whom he discovered the germ of a superior talent, to come and live with him, a proposal which was accepted with ardor by that young man.

"When the *rôles* of 'Rome Sauvée' were well learned, it was rehearsed several times, M. de Voltaire giving himself much trouble to direct and form the actors. At length, all being arranged to his mind, he wished to have the piece played before a company of connoisseurs, to get their judgment upon it. To complete the illusion, he desired that all the accessories should be in accord with the subject of the play. For that purpose, a considerable number of new costumes in the Roman style were necessary, which could not be made without much time and expense. He conceived the plan of borrowing for the purpose the superb dresses and magnificent properties provided by the court for the 'Catilina' of Crébillon, played some time before with great pomp, both at court and in the city. All those effects were preserved with care at the Théâtre-Français, where they were again to be used before long for the same play, though it had already had thirty or forty representations. This run was in consequence of the high protection accorded then to Crébillon,— a protection prepared and obtained by the intrigues of a cabal envenomed against M. de Voltaire, whom they thought to abase and annihilate by exalting Crébillon. . . . . M. de Voltaire asked M. de Richelieu to grant him for a single day the costumes which had been made for 'Catilina.' The First Gentleman of the Chamber consenting without difficulty, all was sent to the Rue Traversière, and nothing now delayed the representation of 'Rome Sauvée.'

"On the day appointed, the hall was filled at an early hour. Only a very few ladies were present, the audience consisting principally of men of letters; among others, MM. D'Alembert, Diderot, Marmontel, the President Hénault, the Abbés de Voisenon and Raynal, and several Academicians, such as the Abbé d'Olivet and others. The Dukes de Richelieu and de la Vallière attended, and some other intimate

friends of the author, whom I had invited on his part. Among them were particularly remarked Father de la Tour, principal of the College of the Jesuits [Louis-le-Grand], and his companion. These fathers never attended any plays except those which were given by their scholars in college; but M. de Voltaire, who had read his tragedy to Father de la Tour, and had received from him strong compliments thereupon, so pressed him to come and see it played that he consented. The actors, kindled by the presence of so many enlightened judges, put into the performance of their parts all the fire of which they were capable. The audience, in general, seemed very well satisfied with them, but were still more so with the piece. They admired the beauty of the poetry, the force and truth of the characters; and connoisseurs agreed that, in these respects, 'Rome Sauvée' was equal to the best of M. de Voltaire's plays.

"The Abbé d'Olivet was especially enchanted, and he openly testified his joy and his gratitude to the author for having at last avenged his dear Cicero for the flat and ridiculous part which old Crébillon had made him play in his 'Catilina.' After the performance, M. de Voltaire could not doubt the general satisfaction. Every one was eager to testify it to him, and urged him not to deprive the public of so beautiful a work.

"The fame of the little theatre of the Rue Traversière rapidly spread over all Paris. Though established first by M. de Voltaire only for the purpose of trying his new pieces, it became in a short time almost a public theatre. His friends, whom he had at first admitted, solicited the same favor for others. Persons of consideration, foreigners of note, who knew him only by reputation, sought admission, and he had not the force to refuse. I have seen more than one minister and more than one ambassador present. It was necessary, at last, to have tickets, the bearers of which alone should be admitted. By means of some steps along the sides of the room, which M. de Voltaire called his boxes, about a hundred persons could find seats, while at least twenty others, standing in a kind of vestibule, could also enjoy the play.

"The fame of the tragedy of 'Rome Sauvée' gave many people a desire to see it. A second representation was given, which was more remarkable than the first, and produced a more lively sensation. Without notifying any of the spectators except three or four, M. de Voltaire himself played the part of Cicero, as he had done once before at the château of Madame la Duchesse du Maine at Sceaux some weeks previously. He excited the same enthusiasm at Paris. Some persons whom I saw thirty years after that representation, and who had been witnesses of it with me, spoke to me of it with as much in-

terest as if it had taken place the evening before. Some time after, M. de Voltaire tried his tragedy of the 'Duc de Foix.' I saw played, also, by the little troupe of amateurs, 'Zulime,' — a piece formerly represented, but little more known than the play last named. Two nieces of the author appeared in it together: Madame Denis in the part of Zulime, and Madame de Fontaine in that of Ative. They played tolerably well, and must have been flattered by the reception which the audience gave them.

"The company of the Théâtre-Français could not be unaware of the celebrity of the theatre in the Rue Traversière. Some of them, against whom M. de Voltaire had no complaint, ventured to come to him and ask the favor of being admitted to his theatre. They were not ill received; for, before they left, M. de Voltaire called me, and told me to give them two tickets for each of the next four representations. The actors thus obliged gave an account to their comrades of the new pieces which they saw performed. The company felt that those pieces would have been very useful to their theatre, which languished for want of interesting novelties. They began to realize their past imprudence, and to feel how wrong they had been in giving M. de Voltaire cause to be dissatisfied. They no longer concealed their desire to atone for their fault. This being the posture of affairs, M. d'Argental and M. de Pont-de-Veyle, his brother, coming to a knowledge of the actors' disposition, undertook to reconcile M. de Voltaire to them, and thus promote the enjoyment of the public, who eagerly desired to see those pieces played, of which they had heard so much. These were the two brothers whom he called sometimes his guardian angels, and sometimes Castor and Pollux, alluding to the tutelary divinities who restored hope and courage to sailors beaten by a tempest. Their friendship, beginning in childhood, was always extremely precious and useful to M. de Voltaire in all the circumstances of his life, and deserved the names which he took pleasure in giving them.

"On the present occasion, those gentlemen spoke to the most influential actors, and made them feel the propriety of sending him a deputation to ask him to open for them his portfolio. The deputation arrived, having at its head as orator M. Grandval. His address, the object of which was to calm M. de Voltaire, asked the oblivion of all past wrongs, and promised that the recollection of those wrongs should be entirely effaced from his mind by their future conformity to all his desires. Grandval ended his speech by entreating the poet, the author of so many masterpieces, to take the company again into favor, and restore to them his works. M. de Voltaire never knew how to keep rancor when any one returned to him in good faith;

and, in fact, I have in other circumstances seen him pardon and forget graver injuries when confession was made and repentance shown. He was not insensible to this proceeding of the actors, gave a good reception to the deputation, and promised compliance with its request. The difference between them was so terminated."

We possess, also, Lekain's recollection of his interviews and residence with Voltaire during this important year, which fixed his destiny. He, too, mentions his surprise and delight upon being invited to visit the author, who was the first of living men in his regard.

"The pleasure [he tells us] which this invitation gave me was still greater than my surprise. But what I cannot describe is my feeling at the sight of that man, whose eyes sparkled with the fire of imagination and of genius. On addressing him I felt myself penetrated with respect, enthusiasm, admiration, and fear. All these sensations at once I experienced, when M. de Voltaire had the goodness to put an end to my embarrassment by folding me in his arms, and thanking God for having created a being who had kindled and moved him by the delivery of verses that were not too good.

"He questioned me upon my condition, upon that of my father, upon the manner in which I had been brought up, upon my ideas of fortune. After having satisfied him upon all these points, and after having taken my share of a dozen cups of chocolate, mixed with coffee, his only nourishment from five in the morning until three in the afternoon, I replied to him with intrepid firmness that I knew no other happiness in life than to play upon the stage; that, a cruel and melancholy chance having left me my own master, and possessing a little patrimony of about seven hundred and fifty francs per annum, I had reason to hope that in abandoning the trade and skill of my father I should not sustain any loss, if I could one day be admitted into the king's troupe of actors.

"'Ah, my friend,' cried M. de Voltaire, 'never do that! Take my advice: act for your pleasure, but never make acting your business. It is the most beautiful, the most rare, the most difficult, of talents; but it is abased by barbarians and proscribed by hypocrites. One day France will value your art aright; but then there will be no more Barons, no more Lecouvreurs, no more D'Angevilles. If you are willing to renounce your project, I will lend you ten thousand francs to go into business for yourself, and you shall pay me back when you can. Go, my friend; come and see me toward the end of the week; consider the subject well, and give me a positive answer.'

"Stunned, confused, and penetrated even to tears by the obliging

and generous offers of that great man, who was called avaricious, hard, and pitiless, I wished to pour out my thanks. Finally I adopted the plan of making my bow while stammering a few words, and I was going to take my leave, when he called me back to ask me to repeat some fragments of the parts I had already played. Without consideration, I proposed to him, with little enough tact, the grand passage from the second act of Piron's 'Gustave.' 'No Piron, no Piron,' said he, with a voice thundering and terrible: 'I do not like bad verses. Speak all you know of Racine.'

"Fortunately, I remembered that, while at the College Mazarin, I had learned the whole tragedy of 'Athalie' from having heard it often rehearsed by the scholars who were going to play it. I began at the first scene, playing alternately Abner and Joab. But I had not yet entirely completed my task, when M. de Voltaire cried out with a divine enthusiasm, —

"'Oh! mon Dieu! the lovely verses! And the wonder is that all the piece is written with the same warmth, the same purity, from the first scene to the last. Everywhere in it the poetry is inimitable. Good-by, my dear child,' embracing me. 'I predict that you will one day rend the heart, but be the delight, of Paris. But never go upon the public stage.'

"Such is an exact account of my first interview with M. de Voltaire. The second was more decisive, since he consented, after the most urgent entreaties on my part, to receive me into his house, and let me play with his nieces and all my company in his little theatre. . . . .

"The expense which this temporary establishment caused him and the disinterested offer which he made me some days before proved to me in a very touching manner that he was as generous and noble in his proceedings as his enemies were unjust in ascribing to him the vice of sordid economy. These are facts of which I have been a witness. I owe still another avowal to the truth; not only did M. de Voltaire aid me by his counsels for more than six months, but he paid my expenses during that time; and since I have belonged to the stage I can prove that he has given me more than two thousand crowns. He calls me to-day *his great actor, his Garrick, his dear child.* These titles I owe only to his goodness; but the title which I adopt at the bottom of my heart is that of a pupil, respectful and penetrated with gratitude."

Lekain adds an anecdote of the dramatist's mode of drilling the troupe: —

"A very young and pretty girl, daughter of a solicitor to the par-

liament, played with me the part of Palmire in 'Mahomet,' in the theatre of M. de Voltaire. This amiable child, only fifteen, was far from being able to deliver with force and energy the imprecations against her tyrant. She was merely young, pretty, and interesting. He therefore treated her with a great deal of tenderness, and, to show her how far she was from being up to her part, he said to her, —

"'Mademoiselle, imagine that Mahomet is an impostor, a cheat, a scoundrel, who has had your father stabbed, has just poisoned your brother, and who, to crown his good works, absolutely wishes to possess you. If all these trifles give you a certain pleasure, ah! then you are right in treating him so gently as you do; but if his behavior gives you rather some repugnance, why, then, mademoiselle, this is how you ought to address him.'

"Then, repeating the imprecation, he gave to that poor innocent child, red with shame and trembling with fear, a lesson so much the more precious since he joined example to precept. She became in time a very agreeable actress."

Thus it was that he found consolation in the art of which he was a votary for sixty years, — an art which was the ambition of his youth, the occupation of his happiest hours, the solace of his old age, his first triumph and his last. His peace was now made with the actors of the national theatre, and he could resume at any moment his career as national dramatist. He put the docility of the company at once to a severe test. Having invited them, with the D'Argentals and a few other devotees of the drama, to the reading of a new tragedy, he read to them, not "Rome Sauvée," which they expected and desired, but his new "Electre," which he now called "Oreste," a piece after Sophocles, in the severe and simple taste of the Greek master. Crébillon had once treated the subject with some success, though his "Electre" had ceased to be performed. Voltaire adhered closely to the Greek system, discarding love, and presenting the awful story in the austere, uncompromising manner of the Greeks. The actors looked blank when he began the session by reading the list of characters.

"You expected," said the author, "that I was to give you a reading of 'Catilina.' Not at all, gentlemen. This year I give you 'Oreste,' and I shall not have 'Catilina' played until next year. Now for the distribution of the *rôles*. I ask the most profound secrecy."

The explanation of this change was very simple, if he had

chosen to give it. The exigencies of the theatre obliged the actors to produce something new within a few days, and the author would not entrust the presentation of his beloved Cicero, and the complicated drama of which he had made Cicero the central figure, until it could be thoroughly rehearsed. The company submitted with a good grace; the parts were distributed, and the rehearsals were begun. At this distance of time, in a country where the arts exist, as it were, by sufferance, and the drama is burdened with odium and disadvantage, we can with difficulty conceive the interest taken by the public in this struggle between Voltaire and the court on the stage of the Théâtre-Français. The polite world of Paris was agitated. When the "Catilina" of Crébillon was performed in 1748, not only did the king pay the whole cost of the costumes and appointments, but the court seconded the attempt to cast Voltaire into the shade. Barbier tells us that for the three opening nights all the boxes were taken a month in advance. The princes and princesses of the royal blood made a point of attending. Servile critics vied with one another in extolling the piece, and by these arts a play insufferably tedious achieved twenty representations.

And now again Paris was astir at the announcement of Voltaire's "Oreste." Piron, if we may believe tradition, took the lead of the cabal against the new piece, and Voltaire, I need not say, omitted no expedient to give it a fair chance of success. The dread night arrived, January 12, 1750. Both parties mustered in prodigious numbers. So zealous were the opponents of the piece that, according to Duvernet, some of them hissed in the street, and they kept up a vigorous hissing in the theatre, long before the play began. The author had taken the precaution to write a short address to the public, to disarm those who pretended that this was an ungracious struggle on his part against a veteran. One of the actors came forward and spoke as follows: —

"Gentlemen, — The author of the tragedy which we are about to have the honor of presenting to you has not the rash vanity to wish to contend against the play of 'Electre,' justly honored by your applause, still less against a fellow artist, whom he has often called Master, and who has inspired in him only a noble emulation, equally remote from discouragement and from envy, — an emulation compatible

with friendship, and such as men of letters ought to cherish. He has only wished, gentlemen, to hazard before you a picture of antiquity. When you shall have judged this feeble sketch of a masterpiece of past ages, you will return to the delineations more brilliant and varied of celebrated moderns. The Athenians, who invented this great art, which the French alone upon the earth cultivate with success, encouraged three of their citizens to labor upon the same subject. You, gentlemen, in whom to-day we see live again that people, as famous for their genius as their courage, — you, who possess their taste, will have their justice also. The author who presents to you an imitation of the antique is much more sure to find in you Athenians than he flatters himself to have rendered Sophocles. You know that Greece, in all its masterpieces, in all the kinds of poetry and eloquence, desired that beauties should be simple. You will find that simplicity in this piece, and you will discern the beauties of the original despite the faults of the copy; you will deign, above all, to accommodate yourselves to some usages of the ancient Greeks, for in the arts they are your veritable ancestors. France, which follows in their footsteps, will not censure their customs; you are to consider that already your taste, especially in dramatic works, serves as a model to other nations. It will suffice one day to be approved elsewhere that it should be said, Such was the taste of the French; it was so that illustrious nation spoke! We ask your indulgence for the manners of antiquity for the same reason that Europe, in the ages to come, will render justice to yours."

This ingenious oration sufficed not to conciliate the enemy. The performance began. During the first four acts, as Duvernet records, it was a contest of applause and hisses, which was amusing, at length, even to the author. There were moments when the stern and awful traits caught from Sophocles silenced opponents and carried the audience away. There was one such moment at the beginning of the fifth act, when the applause seemed unanimous and enthusiastic. But even then the author perceived that it was only his friends who approved. He rose, and, leaning over his box, cried out, "Courage! Brave Athenians, applaud! That is pure Sophocles!" The conclusion of the play, however, gave the enemy another opportunity, and the author discerned that he had carried the Greek severity a little too far. Considering all the circumstances, and, especially, the weight and power of the opposing influences, the evening was regarded as a triumph for the

author. He at once revised the fifth act, and strove, with all his might and tact, to prolong and heighten his success.

We can scarcely wonder that the actors should have been sometimes rebellious under his demands. His letters to Mademoiselle Clairon, during the run of this piece, leave us in doubt whether an actress ought to be envied or pitied for having such an exacting master. After giving her an entirely new fifth act and a considerable list of changes in the other acts, all to be learned and rehearsed in two or three days, he still sends her other trifling changes, as well as minute instructions as to the delivery of striking passages. But, then, how humbly and gracefully he apologizes! "He asks her pardon, upon his knees, for the insolences with which he has loaded her part. He is himself so docile as to flatter himself that talents superior to his own will not disdain, in their turn, the observations which his admiration for Mademoiselle Clairon has extorted from him." Again, a day or two after, upon sending her another change: "It is only by a continual and severe examination of myself, it is only by an extreme docility to wise counsels, that I am able each day to render the piece less unworthy of the charms which you lend to it. If you had a quarter of the docility in which I glory, you would add some unique perfections to those with which you now adorn your part." Then, after a series of hints, he adds, "By observing these little artifices of art, by speaking sometimes without declaiming, by thus shading the beautiful colors which you throw over the personality of Electre, you would actually reach that perfection which you now nearly approach, and which ought to be the object of a noble and feeling soul. Mine feels itself made to admire and advise you; but if you wish to be perfect, think that no one has ever been perfect without listening to advice, and that one ought to be teachable in proportion to the greatness of his talents."

At the second representation of the piece, if we may believe the enemies of the author, the theatre was half filled with his hired partisans, who earned their wages so faithfully that opposition was almost silenced. Every night, as one of the hostile critics has recorded, Voltaire was in the breach, animating his friends, distributing seats, placing his paid applauders, clapping passages himself, and crying to those around

him, "Clap, my dear friends! Applaud, my dear Athenians!" Nevertheless, with all his efforts, the piece at this time had but ten representations. This was a respectable success for the period, and the play called forth the usual fire of parodies, burlesques, and epigrams.

What an incredible activity of mind was his! To these months belongs a pamphlet by him upon the "Embellishment of Paris," in which he recommended that liberality of expenditure in the beautifying of the city which has since made it the most agreeable place of residence in Europe. He dwelt upon the wise economy of such an expenditure. He foretold, what we have seen come to pass, that the influx of strangers in quest of pleasure would cause an ample return from the money invested in noble structures and beautiful public grounds. Paris was then dark and heavy with ecclesiastical edifices; its streets were narrow, unclean, and ill-paved. He desired Louis XV. to do for Paris what Louis XIV. had done for Versailles, and not wait for a great fire to clear the way. "When London was consumed, Europe said, 'London will not be rebuilt in twenty years, and even then it will show the traces of its disaster.' It was rebuilt in two years, and rebuilt with magnificence. What! will it be only at the last extremity that we shall do something as grand? Such an enterprise would encourage all the arts, attract foreigners from the extremities of Europe, enrich the kingdom, far from impoverishing it, and inure to labor a thousand wretched idlers."

CHAPTER XLVIII.

SETTLING IN PRUSSIA.

The King of Prussia had been courting Voltaire for fourteen years, and the long courtship, as is usual, had destroyed some illusions. If Frederic still loved the poet, he had permitted himself to apply to the man the word *fou*, as a lover, in a moment of irritation, calls his sweetheart a little fool. But he desired to possess him not the less. He longed for him. He said to him once that he would have given him a province rather than not had him. Death, in 1749, had removed the king's only rival, and taken away Voltaire's constant excuse for not going to him. He renewed and intensified his solicitations, but saw the bereaved poet arrange himself for an independent existence in Paris.

Why did this German king want this French author? It is Voltaire himself, I think, who suggests the controlling reason. Lord Lyttleton, in his "Dialogues of the Dead," assigns to Pope these words: "When the King of Prussia drew Voltaire from Paris to Berlin, he had a whole Academy of *belles-lettres* in him alone." That was true, but probably not the true reason. Voltaire was the most agreeable of living men to men of intellectual tastes; and a king who is not enough man to enjoy the society of women must solace himself as best he can with amusing men. But this frugal and able monarch would not have given a province even for the best story-teller in Europe. Frederic, then enjoying peace, leisure, and "glory," had again become an industrious author, as the thirty volumes of his works attest. He was writing in prose the history of his house and of his own campaigns, and he was adding frequently to his stock of French verses, of which the authorized edition of his writings contains about forty thousand.

"He was very sure," wrote Voltaire in 1759, "that both his

verses and his prose were much above my prose and my verses, as to the substance; but he believed that, as to the form, I could, in my quality of Academician, give a certain turn to his writings."

These words were not written with benevolent intention, but perhaps they suggest the truth. This great general did not appear to value himself upon his victories; but, keenly coveting the glory of the poet, he may have indulged the hope of one day enjoying it. And, indeed, the wonder is that a man who wrote so many pretty good pieces and some very good lines should not have occasionally risen to the degree of excellence which the world accepts. He wrote a fable or two, which appear to need only a touch from the hand of a Lafontaine to be good French fables. He wrote a few epigrams, odes, and epistles, which seem to want nothing but a certain *tournure* from the pen of Voltaire, to be all that the author wished them to be.

Frederic had just given a new proof of the excessive value which he put upon the verse-making talent. Among the great number of young men whose dawning promise Voltaire had nourished and encouraged was Baculard d'Arnaud, who had written three tragedies (one upon the massacre of St. Bartholomew), neither of which was ever produced, and only one was printed. For many years he had been a needy hanger-on of literature. Several of Voltaire's letters to his man of business, the Abbé Moussinot, end with a request in his favor: "One more louis d'or to Baculard d'Arnaud;" "Instead of twenty-four francs, give D'Arnaud thirty livres, when he comes." Voltaire, at length, procured him the appointment of Paris letter-writer to the King of Prussia, which raised him from a condition approaching beggary to one of tolerable ease, the salary being a thousand francs a year. D'Arnaud, in the fashion of the time, mingled verse with his items of literary and philosophical news. He, too, could compose very pretty and graceful verses, which gave the king, as they had once given Voltaire, an exaggerated estimate of his abilities. In 1750, Frederic, as if despairing of Voltaire, invited D'Arnaud to Berlin, and settled upon him a pension of five thousand francs per annum. He completed the bewilderment of the young man by addressing him a poetical epistle, in which Vol

taire was spoken of as the setting sun of French literature, and Baculard d'Arnaud as the rising luminary of the same.

"Déjà l'Apollon de la France
S'achemine à sa décadence;
Venez briller à votre tour,
Elevez-vous s'il baisse encore;
Ainsi le couchant d'un beau jour
Promet une plus belle aurore."

D'Arnaud, in the spring of 1750, took up his abode in Berlin, where, from being a Paris nobody, he found himself in a position to show these verses in the most distinguished drawing-rooms of the kingdom, with his own verses in reply, modestly declining the royal compliment. An edition of his poems at once appeared, dedicated to the king, and preceded by an epistle to Voltaire, in which the young poet spoke of him as

"Mon maître, mon ami, mon père dans les arts."

The suddenness and splendor of his fortune were, it must be confessed, a severe trial of the good sense of a gazetteer of Paris, thirty-two years of age.

Frederic, meanwhile, held Voltaire to his engagement, which was to pass part of the summer of 1750 at Potsdam and Berlin, on his way to Italy. Voltaire meant to concede no more, and hesitated to concede even so much. His better instinct warned him not to venture again within the personal influence of a king who, as he often said, could caress with one hand and scratch with the other. But he had made too many promises to be able to refuse without giving just offense to the most shining personage of the time, whose protection both himself and his philosophic allies might one day need. He had already been attacked in the citadel of his position by the resuscitation of Crébillon. The rasping, satirical Fréron, whom Voltaire sweetly named "a worm from Desfontaines's carcass," had begun his editorial career of defaming the good and exalting the bad. For many a year to come, he was to earn the good-will of the Boyer faction by assailing, with equal tact and pertinacity, Voltaire, Marmontel, Diderot, and their friends. The Boyers, full of blind confidence, were just beginning that last, long, besotted struggle to crush the intellect of France, which only ended with the explosion that scattered them to the ends of Europe. They had begun to refuse the

sacraments to dying Jansenists who could not show a *billet de confession*, a certificate declaring that they had accepted the Bull Unigenitus. Diderot had already been in prison, and all things in France wore an ill aspect for the little band of audacious, half-enlightened spirits who were to begin to save her.

The King of Prussia continued his importunities. "You are like bad Christians," he wrote: "you put off your conversion from one day to another." Again: "Come, at least, to correct my eulogium of our officers killed in the last war, a poem full of faults, in which I take more interest than in all my other works." D'Arnaud, too, wrote to "my dear Apollo," informing him that he was expected with the greatest impatience in Prussia, and that the king would make a festival of his coming. Apollo may have deemed the letter of the lucky Baculard a little familiar, but he replied to it with his usual gayety.

According to Marmontel, it was this Baculard d'Arnaud who was the occasion of Voltaire's suddenly conquering his reluctance to set out. The vivacious Marmontel, writing forty years after the event, may have unconsciously heightened the comic effects of the scenes which he relates, as he certainly misunderstood some of his facts. He tells us that Voltaire, unwilling to travel without Madame Denis, asked the king to give him twenty thousand francs to defray the additional expense. The king, according to Marmontel, refused this modest demand, which transported Voltaire with fury. "Look," said he to me, "at this meanness in a king! He has barrels of gold, and he won't give a poor twenty thousand francs for the pleasure of seeing Madame Denis at Berlin! But he shall give them, or I myself will not go." The celebrated scenes in Marmontel's Memoirs which follow this anecdote are a curious example of the manner in which falsehood inevitably gathers about a famous name. Marmontel continues: —

"A comical incident happened, which ended this dispute. One morning, as I was going to see him, I found his friend, Thieriot, in the garden of the Palais-Royal, and, as I was always on the watch for literary news, I asked him if he had heard any. 'Yes,' said he, 'some that is very curious; you are going to M. de Voltaire's, and there you shall hear it; for I shall go there as soon as I have taken my coffee.'

"Voltaire was writing in his bed when I went in. In his turn, he asked me, 'What's the news?'

"'I know none,' said I; 'but Thieriot, whom I met in the Palais-Royal, says he has something very interesting to tell you. He is coming.'

"'Well, Thieriot,' said he, 'you have some curious news?'

"'Oh! very curious; and news that will please you in particular,' answered Thieriot, with his sardonic laugh, and the nasal twang of a Capuchin.

"'Let 's hear; what have you to tell?'

"'I have to tell you that Baculard d'Arnaud has arrived at Potsdam, and that the King of Prussia has received him with open arms.'

"'With open arms!'

"'And Arnaud has presented him with an epistle.'

"'Very bombastical and very insipid?'

"'Not at all; very fine, — so fine that the king has answered it by another epistle.'

"'The King of Prussia, an epistle to Arnaud! No, no, Thieriot; they have been poking fun at you.'

"'I don't know what you call fun; but I have the two epistles in my pocket.'

"'Let 's see, quick. Let me read these masterpieces of poetry. What insipidity! what meanness! how egregiously stupid!' said he, in reading the epistle of D'Arnaud. Then, passing to that of the king, he read a moment in silence and with an air of pity. But when he came to these verses, —

'Voltaire 's a setting sun,
But you are in your dawn,'

he started up, and jumped from his bed, bounding with rage: 'Voltaire a setting sun, and Baculard in his dawn! And it is a king who writes this enormous folly! Let him think only of reigning!'

"It was with difficulty that Thieriot and I could prevent ourselves from bursting into laughter to see Voltaire in his shirt, dancing with passion, and addressing himself to the King of Prussia. 'I 'll go,' said he; 'yes, I 'll go, and teach him to distinguish between men;' and from that moment the journey was decided upon.

"I have suspected that the King of Prussia intentionally gave him this spur, and without that I doubt whether he would have gone, so angry was he at the refusal of the twenty thousand francs; not at all from avarice, but from indignation at not having obtained what he asked.

"Obstinate to excess by character and by system, he had, even in little things, an incredible repugnance to yield, and to renounce what he had resolved on."

It seems a pity to spoil so amusing a story, and one which has passed current so long. But we perceive from the letters of Voltaire, D'Arnaud, and the king that Marmontel's forty years had deceived him. Voltaire was cognizant of all the movements of the young poet; congratulated him on his good fortune at every stage of it; congratulated the king upon getting him; busied himself with procuring for the king another Paris correspondent; and alluded, in exquisite verse, to the king's sorry comparison of the rising and the setting sun. He certainly did feel all the indecency of that comparison, and doubtless showed that he did in Marmontel's presence. It did not diminish his sense of its unworthiness when he found the verses circulating everywhere in Paris: —

"Je touche à mes soixante hivers;
Mais si tant de lauriers divers
Ombragent votre jeune tête,
Grand homme, est-il donc bien honnête
De dépouiller mes cheveux blancs
De quelques feuilles négligées,
Que déjà l'Envie et le Temps
Ont, de leurs détestables dents,
Sur ma tête à demi rongées?"[1]

Falling into a lighter strain, he says to Frederic, "What a devil of a Marcus Antoninus you are, to scratch so with one hand, while you protect with the other!"

With regard to Madame Denis and the twenty thousand francs, Marmontel's memory deceived him completely. That lady was to remain at Paris in charge of her uncle's house, assisted in out-of-door business and otherwise by Longchamp. There was never the least suggestion of her going to Berlin until after Voltaire's arrival there, when the king, out of the abundance of his barrels of gold, offered her a pension for life of four thousand francs a year, if she would come to Berlin and keep her uncle's house. There was, it is true, a momentary difficulty with regard to money. May 8, 1750, Voltaire, writing to the king upon the obstacles to his leaving and the little pleasure he felt able to bestow on his arrival, proceeded thus: —

[1] I approach my sixtieth winter; but if so many kinds of laurel shade your young head, great man, is it then quite worthy of you to despoil my white hairs of some neglected leaves, which already Envy and Time have, with their detestable teeth, half gnawed upon my head?

"There is still one other difficulty. I am going now to speak, not at all to the king, but to the man who enters into the detail of human miseries. I am rich, and even very rich, for a man of letters. I have, as they say in Paris, 'mounted a house,' where I live like a philosopher, with my family and my friends. Such is my situation. Yet it is impossible for me to incur at present an extraordinary expenditure; first, because it has cost me a great deal to set up my little establishment: in the second place, the affairs of Madame du Châtelet, mixed with my own, have cost me still more. I pray you, according to your philosophic custom, put majesty aside, and allow me to say that I am not willing to be an expense to you. I cannot have a good traveling carriage, and set out with the help necessary to a sick man, and provide for the expenses of my house during my absence, with less than four thousand German crowns. If Mettra, one of the exchange dealers of Berlin, is willing to advance me that sum, I will secure him upon that part of my property which is the most unquestionable."

The king replied to this letter in forty of his sprightliest verses; but added to his merry lines a few sentences in prose: "As the Sieur Mettra might object to a letter of exchange in verse, I cause to be sent to you one in proper form by his correspondent, which will be of more value than my jingle."

The letter of exchange, which was for sixteen thousand francs, arrived in due time. There was never any question between them with regard to money. The king, generally so frugal and exact in business, as able men are, was profuse towards him, and pressed money upon him.

Another of Marmontel's anecdotes of this period is equally entertaining, and may be accepted as founded upon fact. It belongs to the class of stories which, being often told, gain a little in point, and lose a little in truth, every year; until, after the lapse of forty years, they must be taken with liberal allowance: —

"I again saw a singular instance of this obstinacy of Voltaire's, just before his departure to Prussia. He had taken a fancy to carry a cutlass with him on his journey, and, one morning, when I was at his house, a bundle of them was brought, that he might choose one. But the cutler wanted twenty francs for the one that pleased him, and Voltaire took it into his head that he would give but fifteen. He then begins to calculate in detail what it may be worth. He adds that the cutler bears in his face the character of an honest man, and

that, with such good faith written on his forehead, he cannot but confess that the instrument will be well paid for at fifteen francs. The cutler accepts the eulogy on his face, but answers that, as an honest man, he has but one word; that he asks no more than the thing is worth; and that, were he to sell it at a lower price, he should wrong his children.

"'What! you have children, have you?' asked Voltaire.

"'Yes, sir, I have five, three boys and two girls, the youngest of whom is just twelve.'

"'Well, we 'll think about placing your boys and marrying your girls. I have friends in the treasury; I have some credit in the public offices. But let 's finish this little affair: here are your fifteen francs; say no more about it.'

"The good cutler was confused in thanking Voltaire for the protection with which he was pleased to honor him; but he still kept to his first word about the price of the cutlass, and did not abate one sou. I abridge this scene, which lasted a quarter of an hour, by the turns of eloquence and seduction that Voltaire employed in vain, not to save five francs, — that he would have given to a beggar, — but to prevail by the power of persuasion. He was obliged to yield, and, with a troubled, indignant, embarrassed air, threw upon the table the five-franc piece that he relinquished so unwillingly. The cutler, when he had got his money, returned him thanks for his favors, and went away.

"'I am very glad,' said I, in a low voice, as I saw him go out.

"'Of what?' asked Voltaire angrily. 'What are you glad of?'

"'That this honest man's family is no longer to be pitied. His sons will soon be placed; his daughters married; and he, in the mean time, has sold his cutlass for what he wanted, and you have paid it, in spite of all your eloquence.'

"'And this is what you are glad of, you obstinate Limosin?'

"'Oh, yes; I am quite pleased; if he had yielded to you, I believe I should have beaten him.'

"'Do you know,' said he, laughing in his sleeve, after a moment's silence, 'that if Molière had been witness to such a scene he would have turned it to some profit?'

"'Indeed,' said I, 'it would have been the counterpart to that of M. Dimanche.'

"It was thus that with me his anger, or rather his petulance, always terminated in gentleness and friendship."

Only one formality remained to be complied with. "I have the honor," Voltaire would sometimes say, when his conven-

ience required it, "to be a *domestique du roi*." A gentleman-in-ordinary of the chamber, who was also the king's historiographer, could not leave the kingdom without the king's permission, and he resolved to ask it in person. On two occasions he had been charged with public business of high importance, on leaving France for a visit to the Prussian court. He went to Compiègne, where the King of France was, and, seeking an audience, asked the required permission and the king's orders. The tradition is that he was coldly received. Longchamp relates that the king merely said, "You can set out when you wish," and turned his back. Madame de Pompadour was more gracious. "When I took leave of Madame de Pompadour," he wrote to his niece, "she charged me to present her respects to the King of Prussia. A commission could not be given more agreeably or with more grace. She put into it all her modesty, saying, *If I dared*, and, *I ask pardon of the King of Prussia for taking this liberty*."

Returning to Paris, he gave his last orders to Longchamp, who was to receive part of his revenues during his absence, and furnish Madame Denis with one hundred louis a month for household expenses. If that allowance should be found insufficient, Longchamp was to inform him of the fact, when he would authorize him to provide "a reasonable addition." He expected to be absent three or four months at most. To the last hour he seems to have had misgivings; he implored the D'Argentals to *pardon* his journey, however severely they might judge his new tragedies, which he was still correcting. This visit to the King of Prussia, he said to his friends, had become a duty which, after two years of promises, he could no longer honorably postpone.

He left to the Boyers of France last proofs of his affection in the form of two little tracts of amusing satire: one called "Sincere Thanksgiving to a Charitable Man," in which he reviewed a priestly reviler of Montesquieu, Pope, and Locke. The zealous priest had laboriously attempted to prove that "the partisans of natural religion" are all enemies of the Christian religion. Voltaire congratulated him upon his success in proving that the men in every age and land who had shown the most love of truth and the greatest diligence in its investigation had been hostile to the claims of ecclesiastics.

"Nothing could be said more sensible or more useful to Christianity." The other pat at parting was a leaf entitled "Extract from a Decree of the Sacred Congregation of Rome upon a Libel called Letters upon the Twentieth." This was a broad burlesque of the claim of the clergy to be exempt from taxation. He little thought that he was exiling himself from his native haunts for twenty-eight years by these merry effusions.

"As it is clear that the world is about to come to an end, and that Anti-Christ has come already, the said Anti-Christ having sent several circular letters to some of the bishops of France, in which he has had the audacity to treat them as Frenchmen and as subjects of the king, Satan has joined himself to the Man of Iniquity, in order to put the abomination of desolation into the holy place; which Satan has, to that end, composed a book worthy of him,— a book heretical, savoring of heresy, rash, and unseemly. He strives to prove in the said book that ecclesiastics form part of the body of the nation, instead of maintaining that they are substantially its masters, as they formerly taught. He advances that those who enjoy one third of the revenues of the state should contribute at least one third to the state's support; not remembering that our brethren were created to possess all and give nothing. The said book, moreover, is notoriously filled with impious maxims drawn from natural law, the rights of the people, the fundamental laws of the kingdom, and other pernicious prejudices, tending wickedly to strengthen the royal authority, to cause more money to circulate in the kingdom of France, to relieve poor ecclesiastics now holily oppressed by rich ones.

"For these reasons, it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to US to cause the said book to be burned, in anticipation of doing the same to the author of it, who served in this matter as the secretary of Satan. We demand, moreover, and command that our first-fruits be punctually paid. We condemn Satan to drink holy water at supper every Friday, and we enjoin it upon him to enter into the body of all those who have read his book. Done at Rome, in *Sainte-Marie sans Minerve*, at twenty-five o'clock, May 20, 1750.

"Signed, Coglione-Coglionaccio, Cardinal-President, and, lower, Cazzo-Culo, Secretary of the Holy Office."

This was his parting word to the keeper of the Dauphin's conscience and the bestower of the church's fat things. It was not forgotten.

Berlin is now twenty hours from Paris. Voltaire, who had

a king to order relays of horses for his convenience, accomplished the journey in twenty-five days ; but then he lost several days through a mistake. That precious time, he wrote, which ought to have been employed in rendering " Rome Sauvée " less unworthy of the theatre, he wasted in giving himself a series of indigestions. He left Paris June 15, 1750. July 10th he reached Sans-Souci, near Potsdam, the country palace of the King of Prussia. seventeen miles southwest of Berlin.

What a reception was his ! From a king who told him he was welcome to go, he had come to a king who practiced every seductive art to make him willing to remain. The suite of rooms assigned him in the palace was the one formerly occupied by Marshal Saxe. He was left at absolute liberty. If he wished to dine alone, he had but to indicate the wish. If he desired to entertain company, the king's kitchen and store-room were at his command. The king's horses, carriages, grooms, coachmen, all were at his orders, to use, to send, to lend. If he was disposed to labor, no one interrupted him ; if he strolled abroad, his privacy was respected. The whole court smiles upon the king's favorite. The queen, the queen-mother, the princesses, the princes, the ambassadors, the nobles, all the king's circle of officers and friends, paid assiduous court to him ; and the people of Berlin, who looked towards the court from a great imaginary distance, regarded him with intense curiosity.

At the moment of his arrival preparations were going forward for a grand carousal in the style of Louis XIV., to which the nobility of the kingdom were invited. This magnificent festival, which took place at Berlin, in August, 1750, was an assemblage of everything Prussia could boast of the splendid and the entertaining. Balls, fire-works, concerts, operas, plays, succeeded one another. The court-yard of the royal palace was turned into an amphitheatre, surrounded by ranges of seats, one above another, with decorated boxes in the rear for the king and chosen guests, and, in the midst, an extensive, oblong arena for the exercises. Three thousand troops lined this arena, and guarded the avenues leading to it. Thousands of spectators were present. When all was in readiness, and every eye was directed toward the royal box to catch the first glimpse of the king, a buzz and murmur were

heard in all parts of the inclosure: "*Voltaire! Voltaire! Voltaire!*" He was seen crossing the arena, attended by a number of lords, and walking toward one of the boxes. Soon the king and his family entered, and the performance began. Four quadrilles, or, as Voltaire styled them, "four little armies," entered, of mounted knights, Roman, Carthaginian, Greek, Persian, all superbly costumed and armed, with a prince of the royal house at the head of each. One of these quadrilles came in at each corner of the amphitheatre; in a moment, the great arena was one glitter of prancing horses and gorgeous chevaliers, marching and counter-marching, wheeling and manœuvring, to the sound of the best martial music then attainable. The usual exercises of the tourney followed.

Voltaire could not resist the fascination of the spectacle. "Not the least confusion," he wrote home to D'Argental; "no noise; all the assembly seated at ease, and silently attentive." . . . . The Princess Amelia gave the prizes to the victors. "It was Venus awarding the apple. The Prince Royal won the first prize. He had the air of a hero of Amadis. You can form no just idea of the beauty, the singularity, of the spectacle; the whole terminated by a supper of ten tables and a ball. This is fairy-land." It was, at once, a carousal of Louis XIV. and a Chinese feast of lanterns; for the amphitheatre and its approaches were illuminated by forty-six thousand small lanterns of glass.

The Princess Amelia was not ill-pleased to receive an "impromptu" from the poet, penciled, as she could presume, at the moment of her bestowal of the prize: —

> "Jamais dans Athène et dans Rome,
> On n'eut de plus beaux jours, ni de plus digne prix.
> J'ai vu le fils de Mars sous les traits de Paris,
> Et Vénus qui donnait la pomme."

The master and creator of all this magnificence redoubled his solicitations. He was a little rough on one occasion, which might have warned a Frenchman that he was in a country that could buy French polish, but could never be France. Imagine this colloquy on Voltaire's arrival at Potsdam: —

VOLTAIRE. — "Madame de Pompadour did me the honor to charge me with her respects to your majesty."

FREDERIC. — "I don't know her."

It was blunt. Voltaire did not report the response to the lady. He was polite for two. In a few pretty verses, he contrived, without falsehood, to inform her that her compliments had *reached* the person for whom they were intended. Her myrtles, he added, were now blended with his laurels. Then, —

"J'ai l'honneur, de la part d'Achille,
De rendre graces à Vénus."[1]

If all Frederic's familiars had been as politic, Prussia might have had one enemy the less in the Seven Years' War.

Voltaire did not yield to the king's solicitations without a struggle. He consulted his niece, Madame Denis, upon the change of residence proposed for them both. August 14th, he wrote to her thus: —

"The King of Prussia makes me his chamberlain, gives me one of his orders, twenty thousand francs a year, and to you four thousand a year for life, if you are willing to come and keep house for me at Berlin, as you do at Paris. You lived well at Landau with your husband. I swear to you that Berlin is a better place than Landau, and that there are better operas here. Reflect; consult your heart. You will tell me that the King of Prussia must be very fond of verses. He is, indeed, a French author born at Berlin. He has come to the conclusion that, all things considered, I should be more useful to him than D'Arnaud. I have forgiven the trifling polite verses which his Prussian majesty addressed to my young pupil, in which he spoke of him as the rising sun, very brilliant, and of me as the setting sun, dim enough. He scratches still, sometimes, with one hand, while he caresses with the other; but we must not mind that so much. If you consent, he will have near him both the rising and the setting sun, and, for his own part, he will be in his meridian, writing prose and verse as much as he pleases, since he has no more battles to give. I have little time to live. Perhaps it is pleasanter to die in his fashion at Potsdam than in the manner of an inhabitant of a parish at Paris. After my death you will return thither, with your four thousand livres of dowry. If these propositions suit you, you will pack up your effects in the spring; and, for me, I shall go, toward the end of this autumn, on pilgrimage to Italy, to see St. Peter's of Rome, the Pope, the Venus de Medicis, and the subterranean city. I have always mourned at the thought of dying without seeing Italy. We should meet in the month of May next. I

[1] I have the honor, on the part of Achilles, to return thanks to Venus.

have four verses from the King of Prussia for his Holiness. It would be pleasant to carry to the Pope four French verses from a German and heretical monarch, and to bring back to Potsdam some indulgences. You see that he treats Popes better than he treats ladies. He will compose no verses for you; but you will find good company here; you will have a good house. The king our master must first consent to this. That will be, I think, very indifferent to him. It matters little to a King of France in what place the most useless of his twenty-two or twenty-three millions of subjects passes his life; but it would be frightful to live without you."

Madame Denis, a true child of Paris, was proof against these arguments. She wrote a reply, earnestly dissuading him. The mere rank of the king, she thought, made friendship impossible between them. Kings, too, changed their minds and their favorites. If he gave himself to a king, he would bitterly repent it; his life as the servant of a foreign potentate could only be slavery disguised. This letter he sent to the king's cabinet; whence soon he received an answer, in which Frédéric le Grand, as Voltaire now habitually called him, condescended to refute Madame Denis's reasoning.

[Berlin, August 23, 1750.] "I have seen the letter which your niece writes you from Paris. The affection which she has for you wins my esteem. If I were Madame Denis, I should think as she does; but, being what I am, I think otherwise. I should be in despair to be the cause of my enemy's unhappiness; and how could I wish the misfortune of a man whom I esteem, whom I love, and who sacrifices to me his country and all that is dearest to humanity? No, my dear Voltaire, if I could foresee that your removal hither could turn the least in the world to your disadvantage, I should be the first to dissuade you from it. Yes, I should prefer your happiness to my extreme pleasure in possessing you. But you are a philosopher; I am one also. What is there more natural, more simple, more according to the order of things, than that philosophers, made to live together, united by the same studies, by the same tastes, and by a similar way of thinking, should give one another that satisfaction? I respect you as my master in composition and in knowledge; I love you as a virtuous friend. What slavery, what unhappiness, what change, what inconstancy of fortune, is there to fear in a country where you are esteemed as much as in your own, and in the house of a friend who has a grateful heart? I have not the foolish presumption to believe that Berlin equals Paris. If wealth, grandeur, and magnificence make a city agreeable, we yield

to Paris. If good taste, perhaps more generally diffused, exists anywhere in the world, I know and I agree that it is at Paris. But do you not carry that taste with you wherever you are? We have some organs which give us sufficient means of applauding you, and in point of sentiments we do not yield to any country in the world. I respected the friendship which bound you to Madame du Châtelet; but, after her, I was one of your oldest friends. What! because you retire to my house, it will be said that that house becomes a prison for you? What! because I am your friend, I shall be your tyrant? I confess to you that I do not understand such logic as that, and I am firmly persuaded that you will be very happy here; that you will be regarded as the father of letters and of people of taste; and that you will find in me all the consolations which a man of your merit can expect from one who esteems him. Good-night." [1]

In conversation he was even more affectionate and more urgent. In such circumstances, the poet who deliberates is lost. It is himself who tells us how he yielded to the royal seducer: "The large blue eyes of the king, his sweet smile, and his siren voice, his five battles, his extreme love of retirement and of occupation, of verses and of prose, as well as attentions to turn one's head, delicious conversation, liberty, his rank forgotten in our intercourse, a thousand marks of regard, which even from a private individual would be seducing, — all that bewildered my brain. I gave myself to him with passion, blindly, and without reflection." [2] It was hard indeed for such a man to say No to such a suppliant. "He took my hand," as he afterwards recorded, "to kiss it. I kissed his, and made myself his slave."

As usual in such cases, repentance followed quick. No sooner had he given his word than his heart yearned toward his friends in Paris: he knew not what to say to them; he knew not how to explain this inconstancy of the most constant of men. Writing to the D'Argentals, August 28th, he begins without a beginning: —

"Judge, my dearest angels, if I am not in some degree excusable. Judge by the letter which the king wrote to me from his quarters to mine, — a letter which replies to the very wise, very elegant, very powerful reasons that my niece adduces upon a mere presentiment. I send her that letter; let her show it to you, I beg, and you will think

[1] 22 Œuvres de Frédéric le Grand, 255.
[2] Voltaire to Richelieu. August 31, 1751.

you are reading a letter of Trajan or Marcus Aurelius. Not the less is my heart torn. I yield to my destiny, and I throw myself, head foremost [*la tête la première*], into the abyss of the fatality which conducts us. Ah, my dear angels, have pity upon the struggles that pass within me, and the mortal anguish with which I tear myself from you! I have almost always lived apart from you; but formerly it was persecution the most unjust, the most cruel, the most unrelenting, that separated us. To-day it is the first man in the universe, it is a crowned philosopher, who takes me from you. How do you suppose I could resist? How forget the barbarous manner in which I have been treated in my country? Do you bear in mind that they took as a pretext the 'Mondain'? That is to say, the most innocent *badinage*, which I would read at Rome to the Pope. Do you remember, I say, that base enemies and infamous bigots used that pretext to have me exiled? You will tell me that fifteen years have passed since that was done. No, my angels, only one day; for those atrocious wrongs are always recent wounds."

Madame Denis could hardly come to Prussia after having expressed herself so freely with regard to the Prussian king. She remained at Paris, mistress of her uncle's house there, which he still maintained at an expense of thirty thousand francs a year, as if to preserve for himself a retreat in case his niece proved a true prophet. Frederic himself undertook to procure the consent of the King of France, which was given without delay. The French king took from him his office of historiographer, but allowed him to retain his title of gentleman-in-ordinary of the chamber and his pension of two thousand francs a year. Madame du Hausset, the *femme de chambre* of Madame de Pompadour, has been so good as to inform us what Louis XV. thought of Voltaire's abandonment of his country. That monarch was accustomed to express himself with considerable freedom in Pompadour's boudoir, with a few of his familiars around him, and the *femme de chambre* within hearing distance. He greatly admired his grandfather, Louis XIV., and all his lavish, magnificent ways; and he loved to imitate him, even in the modest pensions bestowed by Louis XIV. upon Racine, Boileau, Molière, Corneille, and others, who give him all the "glory" that remains to his name. Louis XV., Madame du Hausset assures us, was proud of the celebrity of Voltaire, but "feared him, and did not esteem him." One evening, the conversation turned upon his

removal to Berlin. The king and Madame de Pompadour may both have heard the substance of a very long letter written in August, 1750, by Voltaire to Richelieu, in which the author recounted some of the outrages to which he had been subjected through the machinations and misrepresentations of the mitred *âne* of Mirepoix. The king defended himself: —

"'I have treated Voltaire,' said he, 'as well as Louis XIV. treated Racine and Boileau. I gave him, as Louis XIV. gave Racine, the post of gentleman-in-ordinary, and some pensions. It is not my fault if he has committed follies, and if he aspires to be a chamberlain, to have a cross, and to sup with a king. That is not the fashion in France; and, as there are more men of genius and more great lords here than in Prussia, I should be obliged to have a very large table to hold them all' (counting upon his fingers): 'Maupertuis, Fontenelle, Lamotte, Voltaire, Piron, Destouches, Montesquieu, the Cardinal de Polignac.'

"'Your majesty forgets,' said some one, 'D'Alembert and Clairault.'

"'And Crébillon,' continued the king, 'and La Chaussée.'

"'And Crébillon junior,' added some one else; 'he ought to be more amiable than his father. And there is still the Abbé Prévost and the Abbé d'Olivet.'

"'Very well,' rejoined the king, 'during the last twenty-five years, *all that* would have dined or supped with me.'" [1]

The King of France being thus disposed towards him, Madame de Pompadour could not wish him to return to Paris. She could exile or appoint a minister more easily than she could then protect "a philosopher," and Voltaire had no other hope of a safe return. He had written a long letter to Richelieu, apologizing both to her and to him for his apparent "desertion." He recalled old grievances and related new ones. He said that the Bishop of Mirepoix had so poisoned against him the minds of the Dauphin and the queen that he had no prospect in France but an old age of sad obscurity or constant apprehension.

"The old Bishop of Mirepoix [said he] has just burst out against me on the subject of a little piece, imputed to me, entitled 'The Voice of the People and the Sage,' a production which has called forth so many others, such as the 'Voice of the Pope,' the 'Voice of the

[1] Mémoires de Madame du Hausset.

Priest,' the 'Voice of the Layman,' the 'Voice of the Capuchin,' etc. . . . . Could you not have the goodness to represent to Madame de Pompadour that I have precisely the same enemies as herself? If she is piqued at my desertion, and if she regards me as a fugitive, I must remain where I am; but if she believes that I can be reckoned among those who, in literature, can be of some use, if she wishes me to return, could you not say to her that you know my attachment to her, that she alone could make me leave the King of Prussia, and that I left France only because I was persecuted there by those who hate her?"

But she made no sign. For the present, therefore, he had no choice but to remain where he was.

Madame du Hausset adds a trifling fact. Her companion in office (*ma camarade*) returned to the palace, one day, indignant at a "profanation" she had witnessed in the streets of Paris. She had heard a peddler of pictures crying,—

"Here is Voltaire, that famous Prussian! Do you see him, with his big bear-skin cap on to keep out the cold? Only six sous for the famous Prussian!"

APPENDIX I.

LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

RELATING TO VOLTAIRE AND TO HIS WORKS, ARRANGED ACCORDING TO THE DATES OF PUBLICATION SO FAR AS KNOWN, AND WITH THEIR TITLES TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH.

[Collectors may find the original titles of the following works, down to the year 1842, in the "Bibliographie Voltairienne" of J. M. Quérard, Paris, 1842. The rest are to be found in publishers' catalogues issued since January, 1842.]

A Critical Letter upon the New Tragedy of Œdipe. By Father Folard, Jesuit. Paris. 1719.

A Criticism of the Tragedy of Œdipe. By the Comedian, Le Grande. 36 pages, 8vo. Paris. 1719.

A Letter to Madame ———, containing a Criticism of the Œdipe of M. de Voltaire. By M. Van Effen. Paris. 1719.

A Letter from an Abbé to a Country Gentleman, containing Observations upon the Style and Thoughts of the Tragedy of Œdipe, and Reflections upon the last Letter of M. de Voltaire. Paris. 1719.

A Letter to M. de Voltaire upon the New Tragedy of Œdipe. By De Longpierre. Paris. 1719.

Defense of Sophocles, or Remarks upon the Third Critical Letter of M. de Voltaire. By the Abbé Capperonier. Paris. 1719.

Apology of Sophocles, or Remarks upon the Third Critical Letter of M. de Voltaire. By C. Capperonier. 8vo. Paris. 1719.

A Letter from a Swedish Gentleman to M. ———, Professor of the French Language, upon the Tragedy of Œdipe. Paris. 1719.

A Refutation of the Letter from a Swedish Gentleman upon the Tragedy of Œdipe. By M. D. ———. Paris. 1719.

Defense of the New Tragedy of Œdipe of Voltaire. By L. Mannory, Advocate to the Parliament. Paris. 1719.

A Reply to the Defense of the New Œdipe. By M. M. ———. Paris. 1719.

A Letter from the Marquis of M——— to a Gentleman, his Friend, containing a Criticism of the Critics of M. de Voltaire's Œdipe. Paris. 1719.

New Remarks upon the Œdipe of M. de Voltaire, and upon his Critical Letters, wherein Corneille is justified, etc. By the Abbé Gérard. Paris. 1719.

The Satirical Journal Intercepted, or a Defense of M. Arouet de Voltaire and M. de La Motte. By the Sieur Bourguignon. 48 pages, 8vo. Paris. 1719.

A Critical Letter, or Comparison of the three ancient epic Poems, the Iliad and Odyssey of Homer, and the Æneid of Virgil, with the League, or Henry the Great, of M. de Voltaire. By De Bellechaume. 15 pages, 8vo. Paris. 1724.

A Second Letter upon the same subject, and by the same Author. 44 pages, 8vo. Paris. 1724.

Literary Verities upon the Tragedy of Herod and Mariamne. By Messieurs the Abbé Desfontaines and Granet. 12mo. Paris. 1725.

Three Letters to M. de ——— containing some Observations upon the Tragedy of Mariamne of M. de Voltaire. By J. J Bel. 1 vol. 12mo. Paris. 1725.

Apology for M. de Voltaire. By the Abbé Pellegrin. 12mo. Paris. 1725.

Critical Observations upon the Tragedy of Herod and Mariamne of M. de Voltaire. By the Abbé Nadal. 12mo. Paris. 1725.

A Criticism of the Henriade. The Hague. 1728.

Critical Letters upon the Henriade of M. de Voltaire. By Saint-Hyacinthe. 50 pages, 8vo. London. 1728.

Thoughts upon the Henriade. 23 pages, 8vo. London. Without date.

Remarks upon M. Voltaire's Essay on the Epic Poetry of European Nations, etc. By Paul Rolli. London. 1728.

A Defense of some Passages in Paradise Lost from the Hyper-Criticism of M. de Voltaire. By William Duncombe. London. 1728.

Examination of the Essay upon Epic Poetry of M. de Voltaire. Translated from the English of Paul Rolli. By the Abbé Antonini. Paris. 1728.

To the Author of the Epistle to Uranie, preceded by a Letter to M. Bignon. By Travenol. Paris. 1732.

Reflections upon Jealousy, to serve as Commentary upon the last works of Voltaire. By Le Roy. 29 pages. Amsterdam. 1732.

Remarks Historical and Critical upon the History of Charles XII. By M. de la Motraye. 12mo. Paris. 1732.

Religion Defended, a Poem against the Epistle to Uranie. By F. M. C. Deschamps. Pamphlet, 46 pages. Paris. 1733.

Vindication of the Authors censured in the Temple of Taste of M. de Voltaire. Critical Observations upon the Temple of Taste. By the Abbé Roy. 32 pages, 8vo. Paris. 1733.

A Letter from M. ——— to a Friend on the Subject of the Temple of Taste of Voltaire. By the Abbé Goujet. Paris. 1733.

Reply to, or Criticism upon, the Philosophical Letters of M. de Voltaire. By Le Coq. de Villeray. 1 vol. 12mo. Reims. 1735.

Letters in Reply to M. de Voltaire's Philosophical Letters upon the English. By the Abbé Molinier. Paris. 1735.

Letter of M. de Bonneval upon the Criticism of M. de Voltaire's Philosophical Letters by the Abbé Molinier. Paris. 1735.

Translation of a Letter of M. A. Cocchi to M. Rinuccini, Secretary of State at Florence, upon the Henriade. Paris. 1737.

Upon the Thoughts of Pascal (by Voltaire). Paris and the Hague. 1735.

Criticism of Voltaire's Comments upon the Thoughts of Pascal. By De Villeray. Basle. 1735.

Letter of a Physicist upon the Philosophy of Newton, as popularized by M. de Voltaire. By Father Regnault. 46 pages, 12mo. Paris. 1738.

Reflections upon the Philosophy of Newton. 82 pages, 12mo. Paris. 1738.

Remarks upon the History of Charles XII. of Voltaire. By Neitz. 8vo. Frankfort. 1738.

The Voltairomanie, or Letter from a Young Advocate in Reply to the Libel of the Sieur de Voltaire entitled The Preservative, etc. By the Abbé Desfontaines. Paris. 1738.

The Mediator between Voltaire and the Author of the Voltairomanie, a Letter to M. le Marquis de ———. By J. B. D. 12mo, 24 pages. Toulouse. 1739.

Letter of M. ——— concerning a Pamphlet entitled Life of Molière. (By Voltaire.) Pamphlet, 24 pages. Paris. 1739.

Disinterested Judgment concerning the Difference between M. de Voltaire and the Abbé Desfontaines. Pamphlet, 12mo. Paris. 1739.

Examination and Refutation of the Elements of Newton's Philosophy by M. de Voltaire, with a Dissertation upon the Reflection and Refraction of Light. By J. Barrières. Paris. 1739.

A Letter to M. de Voltaire upon his Work entitled Replies to the Objections brought against the Philosophy of Newton. 30 pages, 8vo. Paris. 1739.

Examination and Refutation of the Elements of the Philosophy of Newton. By M. Jean Barrières. Paris. 1739.

Examination and Refutation of some Opinions upon the Causes of the Reflection and Refraction of Light in the Work of M. Bagnières. By L. Le Ratz. 50 pages, 8vo. Paris. 1740.

Remarks, Historical, Political, Mytholog

ical, and Critical, upon the Henriade. By Le Brun. The Hague. 1741.

Remarks of a Polish Lord (Count Poniatowski) upon the History of Charles XII. of Voltaire. 12mo. The Hague. 1741.

Letters upon the True Principles of Religion, wherein are examined the Work upon Religion Essential to Man, by Mademoiselle Hébrut; with the Defense of the Thoughts of Pascal against the Criticism of Voltaire, and three letters relative to the Philosophy of that poet. By D. R. Bouiller. 2 vols. 12mo. Amsterdam. 1741.

Letter from an Actor of Lille upon the Tragedy of Mahomet. By M. de Voltaire. Pamphlet, 8vo. Paris. 1742.

Sentiments of a Spectator of the Tragedy of Mahomet. By the Abbé Cahagne. Paris. 1742.

Defense of the Thoughts of Pascal. By D. R. Bouiller. Paris. 1742.

Letter from a Quaker to François de Voltaire, occasioned by his Remarks upon the English. (By Josias Martin.) 1 vol. 8vo. London. 1743.

Discourse delivered at the Door of the French Academy by the Director to M. ———. (Attributed to Roy.) Paris. 1743.

Letter to the Marquis de ——— upon the Mérope of M. de Voltaire, a Tragedy. By Aubert de la Chesmaye des Bois. Pamphlet, 8vo. Paris. 1743.

A Criticism of Mérope. Pamphlet, 8vo. Paris. 1743.

A Comparison of the two Méropes, Tragedies, by Maffei and by Voltaire. Pamphlet, 12mo. Paris. 1744.

A Letter upon the Tragedy of Mérope, upon the Comedy of the School of Manners, and upon the Freemasons. Pamphlet, 12mo. Brussels. 1744.

Reply of the Marquis Scipio de Maffei, author of the Italian Mérope, to M. de Voltaire, author of the French Mérope. Pamphlet, 12mo. Paris. 1744.

The Birth of Tinsel and of her daughter, Mérope, a tale allegorical and critical. Pamphlet, 12mo. Paris. 1744.

The only True Religion demonstrated against the Atheists, the Deists, and all the Sectarians. By Father Lefevre, Jesuit. 1 vol. 12mo. Paris. 1744.

Examination of a Book entitled The Metaphysics of Newton. Translated from the German of L. M. Kahle. By G. de Saint-Blancard. Paris. 1744.

Sincere Counsels to M. de Voltaire on the Subject of the Sixth Edition of his Poem upon the Victory of Fontenoy. Paris. 1745.

Reflections upon a Printed Piece entitled The Battle of Fontenoy, a Poem. Dedicated to M. de Voltaire. (By Dromgold.) Paris. 1745.

Boileau to Voltaire, a Satire. By Clément of Dijon. Paris. 1745.

Collection of all the Pieces concerning the Suit between M. de Voltaire and the Sieur Travenol, violinist of the opera. Quarto. Paris. 1746.

Letter from an Academician of Villefranche to M. de Voltaire upon his Reception Speech at the French Academy. Pamphlet, 4to. Paris. 1746.

Discourse pronounced at the Academy by M. de Voltaire. (A burlesque.) Paris. 1746.

Parallel between the Henriade and the Lurin. By the Abbé Batteux. Paris. 1746.

Memoir in behalf of Louis Travenol against the Sieur Voltaire. By J. A. R. de Juvigny. Pamphlet. Paris. 1746.

The same, with the Poetical Triumph. (Published by L. Travenol, Jun., violinist of the Royal Academy of Music.) Paris. 1746.

Revealed Religion, a Poem in Reply to that upon Natural Religion. By M. de Sauvigny. 8vo, 64 pages. Geneva and Paris. 1748.

A Melancholy Epistle of the Chevalier Pompon to La Babiole against good Taste, or an Apology for Sémiramis, a Tragedy of M. de Voltaire. Pamphlet in verse, 12mo. By Travenol. Paris. 1748.

The Poet Reformed, or an Apology for the Sémiramis of V. By Favier. Pamphlet 8vo. Amsterdam. 1748.

An Epistle to Philon upon the Tragedy of Sémiramis. In verse. Pamphlet, 12mo. By M. l'Abbé P. Paris. 1748.

Comparison of the Sémiramis of M. de Voltaire and that of M. Crébillon. By Dupuy-Demportes. 46 pages, 8vo. Paris. 1748.

A Criticism, Scene by Scene, of Sémiramis,

a Tragedy by M. de Voltaire. Pamphlet, 8vo. Paris. 1748.

A Critical Letter upon the Tragedy of Sémiramis. By Desforges. . Pamphlet, 12mo. Paris. 1748.

Letter to M. de Voltaire upon his Tragedy of Catilina. By Dupuy-Demportes. Pamphlet, 8vo. Paris. 1748.

A Letter from Madame Sémiramis to Monsieur Catilina, arranged as a vaudeville. By a Songster of Paris. Pamphlet, 8vo. Paris. 1748.

Observations upon Catilina (by Crébillon) and of Rome Sauvée (by Voltaire). Pamphlet, 12mo. Paris. 1749.

Observations upon the Sémiramis of Voltaire, and upon the first Criticism of that Tragedy. By L. Mannory. 77 pages, 8vo. Paris. 1749.

Natalica, an Indian Tale, or a Criticism of Catilina. By Desforges. Pamphlet, 12 mo. Paris. 1749.

A Letter to the Author of Nanine. By Guiard de Servigné, advocate of Rennes. Pamphlet, 12mo. Paris. 1749.

Nanin and Nanine, a fragment of a tale translated from the Arabic. By L. D. V. Pamphlet, 8vo. Paris. 1749.

Critical Reflections upon the Comedy of Nanine. By M. G. Pamphlet, 8vo. Nancy. 1749.

Reflections upon the Tearful Comic (as exemplified in Voltaire's comedy of Nanine). By M. de C., of the Academy of Rochelle. 74 pages, 12mo. Paris. 1749.

The printed Lies of M. Arouet de Voltaire. 8vo. Holland. 1750.

Historical Dissertation upon the Works of M. de Voltaire. By Baculard d'Arnaud, of the Academy of Berlin. Pamphlet, 24 pages. 1750.

A Comparison of the four Electras, of Sophocles, of Euripides, of M. de Crébillon, and of M. de Voltaire. By Gaillard. 124 pages, 12mo. The Hague. 1750.

Letter to Madame the Countess of ——— upon the Tragedy of Oreste by M. de Voltaire, and upon the Comedy upon the Force of Nature, by M. N. Destouches. By L. de Sepmanville. Pamphlet, 12 mo. Paris. 1750.

The Voice of the Bigarrure, to the Authors of the Letters for and against the Immunities of the Clergy. Paris. 1750.

The Voice of the Capuchins. By the Abbé Hervé. 8 pages, 8vo. Paris. 1750.

The Voice of the Poet, and that of the Levite. 22 pages, 12mo. Paris. 1750.

The Voice of the Poor Man. By Joseph Languet de Gergy, Archbishop of Toulouse. Paris. 1750.

A Voice crying in the Wilderness. Paris. 1750.

The Voice of the Rich Man. Paris. 1750.

Memoir in Aid of a History of the Immunities of the Church, or the Ecclesiastical Conferences of Madame de ———, or, if preferred, the Voice of the Woman. 23 pages, 12mo. Paris. 1750.

The Voice of the Priest: very Humble and very Respectful Remonstrances, of the Clergy of the Second Order, to the King, on the Subject of the Twentieth. Paris. 1750. (Suppressed.)

The Voice of the Christian and the Bishop. 12 pages, 12mo. Paris. 1750.

Collection of the Voices for and against the Immunities of the Clergy. 126 pages, 12mo. Paris. 1750.

It must Needs be that Offenses Come. 30 pages, 12mo. Paris. 1750. (Suppressed.)

Voltaire, Ass, formerly Poet (containing satirical letters, parodies, and epigrams). 39 pages, 8vo. Paris. 1750.

A Dissertation upon the Principal Tragedies, ancient and modern, which have appeared upon the subject of Electra, and, in particular, upon that of Sophocles. By M. Dumolard, member of several Academies. Pamphlet, 8vo. London. 1750.

Abstract of the Electras. Pamphlet, 16 pages. Paris. 1750.

Reflections upon the Tragedy of Oreste, in which is naturally placed the Comparison of that Piece with the Electra of M. de Crébillon. By De la Morlière. 47 pages, 12mo. Paris. 1750.

Electra Avenged, or a Letter upon the Tragedy of Oreste and Electra. By M. le N. de C. Pamphlet, 12mo. Paris. 1750.

Critical Response to the Voice of the Sage. 12mo, 88 pages. Paris. 1751.

The Voice of the Pope, or Brief of our Holy Father, Pope Benedict XIV., conveying the condemnation of the Letters, *Ne repugnate, etc.*, and of the Libel en-

titled The Voice of the Sage, of Voltaire. In Latin and in French. 7 pages, 12mo. Paris. 1751.

Refutations of a Libel entitled, The Voice of the Sage and of the People. 12mo, 35 pages. Paris. 1751.

Dialogue between the Age of Louis XIV. and the Age of Louis XV. By Caraccioli. 12mo. The Hague. 1751.

Thoughts Anti-Philosophical. By Allamand of Lausanne. 1 vol. 12mo. The Hague. 1751.

Remarks Historical and Political upon the Anti-Machiavelli of Frederic II., as given by Voltaire. By L. H. de Hesse. Wismar. 1751.

Refutation of a Falsehood, printed in the Age of Louis XIV. By F. L. C. Rival. 4to. Paris. 1752.

Observations upon the Tragedy of the Duc de Foix of M. de Voltaire. By De la Morlière. Paris. 1752.

Flemish Letters, or History of the Variations and Contradictions of the Pretended Natural Religion. By the Abbé Duhamel. 1 vol. 12mo. Lille. 1752.

The Eight Philosophic Adventurers, or an unexpected meeting of Messieurs de Voltaire, d'Argens, Maupertuis, Prévôt, Crébillon, Mouhi, and de Mainvillers, in the Tavern of Madame Tripaudière. A comedy in prose. The Hague. 1752.

Letter from M. de La Beaumelle to M. ——— upon what passed between him and Voltaire. Frankfort. 1753.

The Political Age of Louis XIV., or Letters of the Viscount Bolingbroke upon that subject, together with the pieces which formed the History of the Age of M. de Voltaire, and of his quarrels with Messrs. de Maupertuis and de La Beaumelle; followed by the Disgrace of that famous poet. 12mo, 495 pages. Sieclopolis. (Frankfort.) 1753.

Remarks upon the Age of Louis XIV. By La Beaumelle. Frankfort. 1753.

Critical Letters upon the Philosophical Letters of Voltaire. By D. R. Boullier, Protestant minister. Paris. 1753.

A Dissertation upon the Italian Poetry, in which are interspersed some remarks on M. Voltaire's Essay on the Epic Poets. By Jos. Baretty. London. 1753.

Response to the Supplement (by Voltaire) of the Age of Louis XIV. By M. de la Beaumelle. 12mo. 166 pages. Colmar 1754.

Narrative of the Quarrel of M. de la Beaumelle with M. de Voltaire. By M. Roques. 8vo. Hanover. 1755.

Memoir of M. de Voltaire, annotated by M. de la Beaumelle, preceded by a Letter to Madame Denis. Frankfort. 1755.

Reflections upon the Untrustworthiness of the Documents which M. de Voltaire has followed in treating (in his Abridgment of Universal History to our Days) the fragment entitled Affaire of Genoa and Provence in 1746 and 1747. By M. de la Porte. 8vo, 15 pages. Paris. 1755.

Letter of M. de Bury to M. de Voltaire on the subject of his Abridgment of Universal History. 8vo. London. 1755.

Criticism of the Universal History of M. de Voltaire upon the subject of Mohammed and Mohammedanism. 12mo, 43 pages. Paris. 1755.

A Letter from Poinsinet Junior to a man of the olden time upon the Orphan of China, a tragedy by M. de Voltaire, represented for the first time August 20, 1755. Pamphlet, 8vo. Paris. 1755.

Analysis of the Tragedy of the Orphan of China. By De la Morlière. 42 pages, 12mo. Paris. 1755.

A Letter from Father Grisbourdon to M. de Voltaire upon the Poem of the Pucelle. By De Junquières. 11 pages, 12mo. Paris. 1756.

Introduction to the Henriade, by Frederic II., King of Prussia. (Written in 1736.) Geneva. 1756.

Letter to M. de Voltaire concerning his poem upon the Destruction of Lisbon. By J. J. Rousseau. Paris. 1756.

The Anti-Naturalist, or Critical Examination of the Poem upon Natural Religion. 8vo, 21 pages. Berlin. 1756.

Reflections, Historical and Literary, concerning the Poem upon Natural Religion by Voltaire. By Thomas. Paris. 1756.

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Anti-Uranie, or Deism compared with Christianity, Epistles to M. de Voltaire; followed by Critical Reflections upon several Works of that celebrated Author. By Father Bonhomme, Cordelier. 8vo, 127 pages. Paris. 1763.

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Philosophic Dictionary of Religion, wherein are established all the Points of Doctrine attacked by the Unbelievers, and all Objections replied to. By the Author of the Errors of Voltaire (the Abbé C. F. Nonnotte). 4 vols. 12mo. Avignon. 1772.

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M. B. (J. Bidault) to each of the Objections in La Beaumelle's Commentary; the Preface of Frederic the Great, King of Prussia; the Essay upon Epic Poetry, translated from the English by the Abbé Desfontaines; a Supplement to that Essay; an Article upon the subject of Hesiod; another concerning Ariosto; the Judgments of Contemporaries upon the Poem; a Relation of the Honors which were paid to Voltaire at Paris in 1778; and several other Fragments relating to Voltaire. Collected and edited by M. de Châteaulion. 12mo. Berlin and Paris. 1780.

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